The FORCE of the
ARGUMENT
FOR THE
TRUTH of CHRISTIANITY,
DRAWN FROM A
Collective View of Prophecy,
IN THREE PARTS.

I. A brief State of the Argument.

II. A Defence and further Illuſtration of the Argument.

III. A brief State of the Queſtion, Whether Prophecies or Miracles afford a ſtronger Evidence for the Truth of Chriſtianity.

Occaſioned by *Dr.* Middleton's *Examination of the Lord Biſhop of* London's *Diſcourſes.*

By JOHN ROTHERAM, M. A.
Rector of *Ryton* in the County of *Durham*, and Chaplain to the Lord Biſhop of *Durham.*

THE THIRD EDITION.

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I. A brief State of the Argument for the Truth of Chriſtianity drawn from a Collective View of Prophecy.

THE learned Biſhop *Sherlock*, in his *Diſcourſes on the Uſe and Intent of Prophecy*, has obſerved, that there is a general Dependency amongſt all thoſe Prophecies, that were delivered to the World, concerning the Meſſiah that was to come; that, in applying thoſe Prophecies to our Saviour, we ſhall often fail of giving them their juſt Force, if we conſider them only ſeparately and independently; and that ſuch a partial Conſideration can by no Means give Us an adequate Idea of the grand Scheme of Providence in the Redemption of Mankind.

HIS Lordſhip has further obſerved, that theſe Propheſies were intended by Providence to ſerve Two great Purpoſes. Firſt, *to ſupport the Faith and Religion of the old World.* And Secondly, *to give Teſtimony to the Miſſion of Jeſus.* He has ſhewn, with a View to the *firſt*, how the Revelation of the Meſſiah was gradually opened, and unfolded by little and little, according to the different Exigences of

the ſeveral Ages in which it was delivered, and the Meaſure of Support and Comfort that was neceſſary to be imparted to them: But He obſerves, that the *ſecond* Purpoſe abovementioned will be ſtill farther aſſiſted by taking in one entire View the whole Scheme of Prophecy, aud that *they who conſider the Prophecies under the Old Teſtament, as ſo many Predictions only, independant on each other, can never form a right Judgment of the Argument for the Truth of Chriſtianity drawn from this Topic.*

Now an entire View of the Prophecies may be taken in *two* different Lights: either *ſucceſſively, as they lie in Order of Time*; or *collectively, as they All together make up one compleat Set of Predictious relating to the ſame Perſon.* Theſe Views are manifeſtly diſtinct: The *firſt* of them is, I apprehend chiefly to be attended to, when we ſpeak of *ſupporting the Faith of the Old World*; as the *latter* of them is moſt ſubſervient to the *Proof of Chriſtianity.*

THAT the Prophecies of the Meſſiah recorded in the Old Teſtament are diſpoſed in a regular and dependent Order, cannot be doubted by any one who ſeriouſly conſiders them: and that this Order was not fallen upon accidentally, and without Deſign, I think, will admit of as little Diſpute. The *Giving Teſtimony to Chriſt's Miſſion* could not be the Deſign of Providence in diſpoſing them in this Order. For it will appear that a Set of Prophecies, if they only contained a full Deſcription of the Meſſiah, would have given as perfect an Evidence

dence to the Divine Miſſion of Jeſus, in whatever Order they had been delivered, or delivered even without any Regard to Order, as they do when ranged in that Regularity in which they now appear.

No other Conditions could be requiſite for this End than that the Prophecies ſhould be, 1. *ſo clear as to be eaſily applicable to the Meſſiah*; 2. *ſo numerous and particular, as to comprehend a View of the moſt material Actions of his Life, and the Intention of his Coming*; *and, as to be neceſſarily reſtrained to him, and applicable to no one elſe.* Now theſe Conditions might be obtained, without any Regard to *the Order* in which the Prophecies were delivered: and therefore the giving a more perfect Teſtimony to the Miſſion of Jeſus, could not be the Deſign of Providence in giving that regular Arrangement to theſe Prophecies in which they are diſpoſed. But then theſe Conditions could not both be obtained without a Regard to the *ſecond View* of Prophecies which we have pointed out. For though the Prophecies might have been ſo plain as to be eaſily applicable to the Meſſiah (as in Fact all the Prophecies applied to him are) yet unleſs they did all together make up *one compleat Set of Predictions relating to the ſame Perſon*, they could not have been ſo numerous and particular as to comprehend a View of the moſt material of our Saviour's Actions, and the Intention of his Coming, nor as to be reſtrained to him alone, and applicable to no one elſe.

THESE Diſtinctions then, I apprehend, give a clear and eaſy Account how far Prophecies, diſtinctly and independently conſidered, can go towards producing a perfect Teſtimony of the divine Miſſion of Jeſus, and how far they muſt fail in doing this. We muſt eaſily ſee, that Prophecies, ſingly conſidered, might be ſo plain as to be applicable to our Saviour: but then under this View only they could go no farther. They might ſtill be of ſuch a Nature, (and in Fact many of them are of that Nature) as to be applicable to many more beſides the Perſon of our Saviour. Thus that Prediction, which ſays the Meſſiah ſhould make his Grave with the Rich, is plainly applicable to our Lord, becauſe it undoubtedly happened to him; but it happened to many beſides our Saviour, and therefore, if we conſider it no otherwiſe than ſingly, the Evidence of this Prophecy is manifeſtly loſt. It can no more, by its own ſingle Force, prove Jeſus of *Nazareth* to be the Meſſiah, than it can a Thouſand others, to whom the ſame Thing happened in common with him. It only ſets his Claim to that Title upon a Level with that of all thoſe on whoſe Corpſes, ſince the giving out of the Prophecy, the ſame diſtinguiſhed Interment has been beſtowed. But when we give it a Place amongſt a Collection of Prophecies that were all given out concerning the ſame Meſſiah, then we ſee how, under this collected View, it is at once reſtrained, and aſſiſts in reſtraining others, to the Perſon of our Saviour; ſince it can then

then only be applicable to him in whom all the other Circumſtances concurred, nor can the reſt be applied, but where this is alſo due. 'Tis true there are ſome of the Prophecies by their Nature more reſtrained. There are perhaps ſome of them which no one could, in ſtrict Juſtice, pretend to have fulfilled but our Saviour alone. Theſe are however far the ſmalleſt Number. Nay there are ſcarce any of them, which a cavilling Age would have allowed him a peaceable and inconteſted Right to: and, in by far the greateſt Number, He would have had many Competitors. But if they fail here, much leſs can ſcattered, disjointed Predictions anſwer the other Part of the ſecond Condition. For it is a Contradiction, that a Prophecy of a ſingle Event ſhould comprehend a View of the moſt material Actions of the Meſſiah, and the Intention of his Coming. We ſee how ſmall a Part of that Evidence for the Truth of our Saviour's Miſſion, which Reaſon teaches us to expect from Prophecy, is obtainable from Prophecies ſingly and independently conſidered: and therefore how neceſſary it is, in Order to draw a concluſive Argument for the Truth of Chriſtianity from this Topic, to take an entire View of the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament in the ſecond Light, as they all together make up one compleat Set of Predictions relating to the ſame Perſon.

If we ſhould attend only to one ſingle Operation of Nature, or to one ſingle Act of God's Dealings with his Creatures, we might perhaps be

be tempted to deny a Providence. But if we take in at one comprehenſive View the whole Syſtem of Nature, and run through the whole Scheme of God's Diſpenſations, then the Proofs of Power and Wiſdom ſhine in ſo ſtrongly upon Us, that We cannot help acknowledging the great and good Creator and Governour of the Univerſe. So here, when we attend only to one ſingle Prophecy, ſo narrow and partial a View will at beſt leave the Mind clogged with great Uncertainties: but when We enlarge our View, and admit at once the whole Syſtem of Prophecies; then the Evidence for our Saviour's divine Miſſion breaks in with a Force ſo irreſiſtible as carries all Doubts before it, and pours ſtrong Conviction and full Aſſurance over all the Mind.

I do not deny, but that the firſt View of Prophecy may contribute ſomething towards ſtrengthening, or at leaſt beautifying, the Argument drawn from thence for the Truth of Chriſtianity. For 'tis certain that the Syſtem of Prophecies cannot be ranged in a more beautiful Order than that wherein they ſtand. And beſides; having an Eye to the Occaſions for which they were given, the Place they poſſeſs in the Series of Prophecies, and the Circumſtances that attended their Delivery, cannot fail of giving Light to ſeveral particular Prophecies. There is ſome Reaſon to imagine, that our Saviour and his Diſciples looked upon this as the moſt commodious Order, in which to draw out theſe Prophecies, to give their Evidence to the Truth of his Miſſion.

Wherever

Wherever they had Occaſion to produce this Teſtimony, they generally began with *Moſes*, and then deſcended in Order to the reſt of the Prophets. We have a ſtrong Preſumption of our Saviour's eſpecial Regard to this Method, joined with a direct Proof, that He thought the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament gave the beſt Evidence to his Miſſion when collected, in the pathetic Account of his Diſcourſe with the Diſciples in the Way to *Emmaus*. [a] *O Fools, and ſlow of Heart*, ſaid He, *to believe all that the Prophets have ſpoken! Ought not Chriſt to have ſuffered theſe Things, and to enter into his Glory? And beginning at Moſes and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the Things concerning himſelf.* From which We can gather Nothing leſs than this, that, in Order to convince his doubting Diſciples of the Truth of his Miſſion from the Topic of Prophecy, He both ſummed up all the Prophecies contained in the Scriptures concerning himſelf, and alſo purſued that Order in which Providence had thought fit to diſpoſe and connect them. He began from *Moſes*, and expounded what related to his Miſſion throughout all the Scriptures.

THIS Obſervation will be ſtrengthened if we conſider that this was the firſt Time the Argument was, and could have been, made Uſe of in its full Extent. The Prophecies had not till then received their full and final Completion. The Scene of our Saviour's Sufferings was now cloſ-

a Luke 24. 25 &c.

ed,

ed, he had drank the bitter Cup, had paid down our Ranſom, had ſhewn himſelf victorious over our grand Enemy, and in ſhort had finiſhed the great Work of his Miſſion; and now at laſt every Character given of the Meſſiah appeared legible in his Perſon. The Prophecies therefore could not have been earlier applied to him in a collected and dependent View. All that could be done in his Life-Time was to apply particular Prophecies, and to accommodate them to himſelf, as they one by one received their Completion in the Courſe of his Actions. But now He was able to gather them up, and to urge, as one powerful and irreſiſtible Argument of the Truth of his Miſſion, the perfect and thorough Correſpondence between his whole Life and Actions, and the entire Plan of them made up of the whole Set of Prophecies laid together and united. Our Saviour's Uſe of this Kind of Argument on the very firſt Occaſion, after it was capable of being put in Force, ſeems clearly to point out to Us the moſt proper Uſe of Prophecy in applying it to the Proof of his Miſſion; and the Evangeliſt's apparent Care in deſcribing ſo particularly this important Occurrence to Us, may juſtly be looked upon as a deſigned Recommendation of this our Saviour's Method of treating Prophecy as a Pattern moſt worthy our Imitation.

The firſt View of Prophecy is chiefly concerned in leading Us to the firſt Uſe of it. For the greateſt Strength of Teſtimony appears plainly to be deducible from the Second View of it.

From

From that ſingly, all the neceſſary Conditions, requiſite to make Prophecy a compleat Teſtimony, are to be obtained; and this ſeems to add more Grace than Strength to the Argument. Since then there is a manifeſt Order and Subordination obſervable in the Prophecies, and ſince We cannot ſuppoſe this Order to be the Effect of Chance, neither is the Uſe it can be of, in bringing about the ſecond End of Prophecy, conſiderable enough to be thought the ſole Purpoſe of it; it remains that it muſt have been planned in Subſerviency to the firſt End of Prophecy, and with a View of ſupporting the Faith and Religion of the Old World. That they are fitted to ſerve this great End will eaſily appear.

MAN's Innocence was the Condition on which he held his original Title to Happineſs. Having loſt his Innocence, he had therefore no longer any Means of obtaining Happineſs. For if We ſay that he could, by any natural Abilities of his own, raiſe himſelf again to forfeited Happineſs, what is this but deſtroying all eſſential Difference between Virtue and Vice? taking the Scales of Juſtice from the Hand of God, and making Man himſelf Arbiter of the Terms on which he will be ſaved? For, on this Suppoſition, when he had ſinned, he had nothing more to do than to exert that Power with which he was endued, and be reſtored again to all the Priviledges of unſtained Virtue. And what is ſuch a Power, but a Power of ſetting up an Equality between Virtue and Vice? It is placing Man beyond all Poſſi-

bility of forfeiting his Title to Happineſs. For he could never forfeit his Title to that, which he had in himſelf a natural Power of obtaining.

The firſt Sinner therefore could have no reaſonable Expectations of Happineſs, except it ſhould pleaſe the Mercy of God to open for him a new Way to it. This God vouchſafed to do out of his great Compaſſion for the helpleſs State of fallen Man. He provided an Expiation for thoſe Sins, which Man himſelf was unable to expiate, the Sacrifice of his beloved Son; and changed the Conditions of Happineſs, on our Part, from perfect Innocence, which we were no longer capable of, to Repentance, and Faith in the Merits and Satisfaction of Chriſt. But ſtill Man could not attain to the Knowledge of theſe Conditions, (ſince they depended not on his own, but on the divine Will,) and therefore could not lay hold of the Benefits of them, without ſome Revelation made to him of that divine Will. Hence it appears how excellently the firſt Prophecy was appointed for ſupporting the Faith and Religion of the firſt of Men; ſince without it they muſt have been utterly deſtitute of all Faith and Principles of Religion. For without it they could neither have known the Object of Faith, nor have had Hope in the Object of religious Worſhip. It conveys juſt ſo much Light as the Condition of Man at that Time required, a general Promiſe of a Deliverer. Who he was to be, at what Diſtance of Time he was to appear, or what were to be the Characters of his Perſon,

Perſon, it imported them little to know. Theſe were Diſcoveries reſerved for the Exigences of ſucceeding Ages. That there ſhould ariſe one who ſhould finally triumph over their grand Enemy, and thereby reſtore them to the Happineſs they had loſt all Title to by their Defection from Innocence, was enough to raiſe them from Deſpair to a Hope in God; it was a ſufficient Foundation for Truſt in his Mercies, and Faith in a promiſed Redeemer.

THIS Promiſe was granted to the Father of the whole Race of Men. They were all alike to ſhare in the Benefits of it. It was therefore expreſſed in general Terms, becauſe it was to be the Baſis of a general Hope. But the Promiſe made to *Abraham* was more confined. It limited the Expectations of giving Birth to the promiſed Meſſiah to his Seed. And who does not ſee how conducive theſe Expectations were, towards carrying on the Intereſt of Providence, at that Time? God was then ſelecting a peculiar People for the better Preſervation of Religion, and the Foundation of religious Hopes: And what could ſo effectually engage them heartily to concur in his Deſigns, as to diffuſe through them all, from their very Fountain, the Opinion, that they were ſet apart by God, and ſacred to the great Purpoſe of giving a Meſſiah to the World? Nothing could ſo ſtrongly cement and unite them amongſt themſelves, or inſpire them with ſo warm a Deſire of preſerving themſelves a diſtinct People, unmixed with other

Nations, and of performing with Alacrity all thoſe Ceremonies deſigned ſtill further to ſecure their Diſtinction.

But leſt this People, conceiving too high an Opinion of the Excellency of their Conſtitution, ſhould be deſirous of adhering to it, and of ſupporting it, even after the divine Protection was intended to be withdrawn from it, it was expedient they ſhould know that God had preſcribed a Period to its Duration, and only intended that its Obligation ſhould be temporary. And what could ſo effectually ſerve this Purpoſe, as that the Declaration of this divine Appointment ſhould come from the Mouth of the very Perſon, who was the Inſtrument of God in giving their Laws? That thus the great Veneration, they would conceive for One whom God had honoured with this high Commiſſion, might be kept within due Bounds even by its own Force, and that the ſame Authority, which gave them Zeal to defend their Law, while it was intended to laſt, might alſo incline them to give it up without Reluctance, to that more excellent and perfect Law, which was to ſucceed it. Here then lay the Propriety of putting this Prophecy into the Mouth of *Moſes*, *The Lord thy God will raiſe up unto Thee a Prophet from the midſt of Thee, of thy Brethren, like unto me; unto him Ye ſhall hearken.* Deut. 18, 15.

We ſee how juſtly the Degrees of Light were proportioned to the Exigences of the Times, in which they were delivered, and how well adapted

ed to excite in the Minds of Men, ſuch Impreſſions, as might moſt conduce to forward the benevolent Deſigns of Providence. This Specimen ſufficiently ſhews the Fitneſs of the Prophecies to the particular Periods, to which they are aſſigned, and how juſtly the Degrees of Revelation were meaſured out according to the Wants of thoſe to whom they were vouchſafed. We might carry on this View of the Prophecies much farther, and ſhew of moſt of the ſucceeding ones, that they had a manifeſt Tendency to ſupport, or revive the Faith of thoſe to whom they were given.[a] For they were generally beſtowed, as theſe we have already conſidered plainly were, at Times when the People, under Difficulties or Diſtreſſes, ſtood moſt in Need of ſuch Support; or when they wanted Encouragement for undertaking ſome arduous Attempts. But this is not neceſſary. For We cannot doubt but that Providence would carry the ſame gracious Deſign throughout the whole Revelation, that appears in the Beginning of it.

SHOULD we now ſuppoſe the Order of the Prophecies to be changed or diſturbed, the Appearance they would then make, under this different Diſtribution of them, would further illuſtrate the great Wiſdom of aſſigning them that Order they at preſent poſſeſs. Imagine then the Prophecies we have been conſidering to be in any Manner tranſpoſed, and you will ſee that it cannot be ſo contrived, but that great Inconve-

a See Diſcourſes &c. particularly Diſc. 6. Page 148 &c.

niences

niences would reſult from the Change. Suppoſe the Promiſe to *Abraham* removed back to *Adam*. It could not have added the leaſt uſeful Light to that which the general Promiſe of a Redeemer conveyed. For what availed it *Adam*, to know the Name of One of the remote Anceſtors of the Meſſiah? and to ſay that *Abraham* ſhould be his Father, what was it ſaying more to *Adam*, than that one of his Seed ſhould be his Father? But it would have been worſe than barely ſuperfluous here. For it would have laid the Deity, under a Neceſſity of giving a public Atteſtation, to the Perſon of this *Abraham*, either by a Set of Prophecies deſcribing his Character, and the Time and Place of his Birth, or by working ſome great Miracles for this Purpoſe, or by ſome other public Demonſtration, that He was the very *Abraham* from whom it was foretold, that the Meſſiah ſhould ſpring. For without ſome ſuch public Proof he might have been overlooked, or his Claim conteſted; inſtead of adminiſtring Evidence it would have ſupplied conſtant Matter of Exception and Diſpute; For how could we have anſwered thoſe who ſhould have aſſerted that the *Abraham*, from whom the Meſſiah was to ſpring, was of another Family, another Country, or Nation? Should we on the contrary bring it nearer to the Time of our Saviour, it would, at leaſt for the intervening Time, loſe all its Influence for determining the Seed of *Abraham*, to keep up their Diſtinction from the Reſt of Mankind; and *Abraham* himſelf would be

be deprived of ſome Part of the great Motive, that inſpired him with Reſolution, in maintaining the Honour of God's Name, amidſt an idolatrous People, and in encountering all the Difficulties which Providence thought fit to lay upon him.

SHOULD we again, reverſing the firſt Experiment, bring down the Promiſe made to *Adam* to ſome later Age, how unhappy would be the Conſequence! Beſides the great Difficulties of making the Revelation public in the World now become populous, It would leave the wretched Part of Mankind, who were deſtined to the dark Period which went before it, abandoned to Ignorance, or, what is ſtill more deplorable, to all the Horrors of Deſpair, and the certain Apprehenſions of the divine Diſpleaſure. Thus to change or diſplace any of the Prophecies, like removing ſome of the great Bodies of the Univerſe, would lay in Ruins, or at leaſt greatly disfigure, the whole Syſtem.

THE Prophecies were all inſpired by the ſame Holy Spirit. When therefore ſo noble an End as the Support of Religion, which has always been the peculiar Care of Heaven, could be anſwered barely by giving a particular Arrangement to the Prophecies, to imagine that the Arrangement moſt ſuitable to that End was fallen upon by Chance, or to ſuppoſe that the Prophecies have been wildly ſcattered through different Ages, without any Regard to Order at all, is certainly ſinking the Oeconomy of the divine Spirit,

Spirit, to a Pitch even lower than that to which human Prudence uſes to attain. For even a prudent Mortal does not neglect to give his Affairs the moſt commodious Diſpoſition, nor will he jumble them together in Perplexity and Confuſion, where he is ſenſible that Regularity would have conduced greatly to his Intereſt. The Prophecies being diſtributed, as they are, through all the Ages which preceeded our Saviour's Coming, is of itſelf an Argument that Wiſdom and Benevolence were concerned in appointing them their Stations, and that they were beſtowed with a gracious Intention, as the Favours of Providence, on thoſe who were thought worthy of them. Had they been all laviſhed upon any one Age, their Influence muſt have been loſt to others. Had they all been given out with a profuſe Hand to the firſt, their Force would have gradually decayed; long and unregarded Expectation would have wearied out Faith, and they would at laſt have vaniſhed like Dreams, and been loſt in the ſpreading Corruptions of Mankind. Or had they all been reſerved to the later Ages, who could without Commiſeration have looked back on the total Darkneſs, in which all Antiquity muſt have been involved! But when We ſee them diſſeminated with an even Hand through all Ages, who does not adore the univerſal Goodneſs, and admire the wiſe Oeconomy of Providence, thus diſpenſing his Mercies as the Neceſſities of his Creatures called for them, awakening at every fit Period the languiſhing

Faith

Faith of the World, refreſhing the thirſty Souls of his faithful Servants with a due Share of his Goodneſs, ever repeating the decayed Impreſſions of his Promiſes, and keeping alive and invigorating their Hopes, by renewed Aſſurances of his gracious Intentions! Upon the Whole, ſince it appears that the Order, in which the Prophecies are now diſpoſed, is of all others the fitteſt for producing and ſuſtaining the Faith of the Old World, and that all other poſſible Diſtribution of them, would neceſſarily deſtroy or greatly weaken this Tendency in them, we may fairly conclude, that the all-wiſe and bountiful Author of them, when he placed them in this beautiful Subordination, was not regardleſs of the great Benefits which, only under the Form he had given them, they were moſt capable of producing. Or in other Words; that a ſucceſſive View of the Prophecies leads us to diſcover that they were deſigned by Providence, to ſupport the Faith and Religion of the Old World.

When now, in Purſuance of this great Deſign, God had, *by ſpeaking*, as the Apoſtle expreſſes it, *in different Parts and in different Manners to the Fathers by the Prophets*, made a compleat Revelation of his Will concerning the Redemption of the World; when he had by frequent Additions diſplayed every Character of the Meſſiah, and thus filled up and finiſhed the Great Out-Line that was delineated in the firſt general Prophecy of him: then commenced the Second Uſe of Prophecy, then was it fitted to

give a compleat Evidence to the Saviour that was to come. At that Period the Expectations of the faithful were raiſed to the greateſt Height. They contemplated with awful Veneration the great Plan that was now wholly unfolded, and waited, with pious Fervour and devout Wiſhes, for the approaching Salvation. They ſtood wrapped up in ſilent Admiration, when they perceived the grand Criſis draw near in which the Promiſes of God, now ſhut up, were about to be made good; and, filled with a deep and ſtill Attention, expected when God would open in Reality that glorious Scene, the Deſcription of which was now compleated. How their Hopes were anſwered by the Event, it beſt becomes the ſacred Volumes to tell.

II. A Defence and further Illuſtration of the Argument.

SINCE the firſt Uſe of Prophecy laid down above, and all collective Views of the Prophecies for either of the Purpoſes to which they have been applied, have been lately oppoſed with great Severity, and condemned by an Author of great Note; to lay down ſuch a View of them without any Regard to his Objections might be cenſured as Raſhneſs, as a Want of proper Deference to an Author of his Eminence; nay as a Step unſafe for the Scheme itſelf; ſince it might be looked upon as leaving a Fortreſs undefended, except by its natural Strength, when a Battery directed by a great Maſter was playing againſt it. I ſhall therefore conſider the Objections he has made to it.

HE tells Us *that our Saviour himſelf and his Apoſtles conſidered the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, in a Light very different from that in which his Lordſhip would place them. That they always applied them ſingly and independently on each other to this or that Occaſion, as ſo many different Arguments for the general Truth of the Goſpel.*[a] In ſup-

a Examination of the Lord Biſhop of *London*'s Diſcourſes &c. by *Conyers Middleton* D. D. Pag. 8.

port of this Declaration he proceeds to ſhew, *how Jeſus himſelf conſtantly taught that his Perſon and Character were particularly foretold, and marked out by* Moſes *and all the later Prophets as the Meſſiah, or that great Prophet who was to come: and that he came accordingly, as it had been foretold to them, not to deſtroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them.* [a] This he illuſtrates from *his general Exhortation to the Jews to ſearch the Scriptures for the Proofs of his Character and Miſſion, for they are they which teſtify of Me, ſays our Saviour. From his aſſerting that a Belief in* Moſes *ought to produce a Belief in him. Had ye believed* Moſes *ye would have believed Me; for He wrote of Me. From his Reproof to his Diſciples in the Way to* Emmaus, Luke 24. 25 *&c. From thoſe particular Prophecies alledged by him as prefigurative of his Character and Miſſion.* [b] *Which Inſtances of the Uſe of Prophecy, as it was applied by Jeſus himſelf, ſufficiently ſhew,* he thinks, *that the ancient Prophecies were conſidered by him ſingly and independently, as ſo many diſtinct Arguments for the Truth of his Miſſion.* This Argument he endeavours further to ſtrengthen *by an Account of the Practice of the Apoſtles, who refer Us,* he ſays, *for the Evidences of our Faith to* Moſes *and the Prophets. Saint* Matthew *was ſo diligent in collecting the prophetic Teſtimonies of Chriſt, and applying them ſeverally on all Occaſions as ſo many diſtinct Proofs of the Miſſion of Jeſus, that there is ſcarce* A SINGLE OCCURRENCE WHICH EVER

a Page 9. b See Pag. 12, 13, 14, 15, 16.

HAP-

HAPPENED TO CHRIST, *but what he declares to have been before told by ſome Prophet, and* FULFILLED BY A CORRESPONDENT EVENT. *And all the other Evangeliſts,* he tells Us, *purſue the ſame Method.*

AFTER having weighed all that is here drawn out from the Scriptures, to inſtruct Us in the Method the Apoſtles, and our Saviour himſelf made Uſe of, in applying the Prophecies of the Old Teſtament, I muſt confeſs I do not diſcover the leaſt Appearance of any Thing in it inconſiſtent with his Lordſhip's Scheme. Nay it ſeems to Me to agree entirely with it, and to be in all Reſpects ſuch an Account as the Biſhop himſelf might be ſuppoſed to have gathered from the New Teſtament, had he been called upon to ſhew that his Notion of a Syſtem of Prophecy was reconcileable to the Senſe of our Saviour and his Evangeliſts. For ſuppoſing them all to have been actually of Opinion, with the Biſhop, that there was a Chain of Prophecies reaching from very diſtant Ages down to a few Centuries before his Coming, is there any Thing in all their Conduct or Diſcourſe, as Doctor *Middleton* repreſents it, that betrays a Contradiction of Sentiments? Could not our Saviour, without departing from this Opinion, have exhorted the Jews to ſearch the Scriptures for the Proofs of his Character and Miſſion? or rather, would he have uſed any other Exhortation, if he had intended to eſtabliſh amongſt them this very Opinion? Could he not preſerve the ſame Conſiſtency,

cy, and yet reproach the Jews with a Want of Belief in *Moſes*, becauſe they believed not in him? or his Diſciples with Want of Faith for doubting his Reſurrection, when he made it apparent to them from the Scriptures, that He ought to have ſuffered and to enter into his Glory? And muſt he, ſuppoſing a Chain of Prophecies to run through the Books of the Old Teſtament, have forgot himſelf when he aſſerted that he came not to deſtroy the Law and the Prophets, but to fulfill them? It may be ſaid, that it is not ſo much the general Declarations of an Agreement between our Saviour's Character and the prophetical Account of it, that makes the Biſhop's Deviation from the Opinion of our Saviour and his Apoſtles evident, as the Application of particular Prophecies to the Particulars of our Saviour's Life. And does this make it out? When any one aſſerts that the Prophecies relating to the Meſſiah lie in a beautiful and connected Order, do We underſtand him as denying that thoſe Prophecies ſeparately conſidered bear any Reſemblance to the Particulars of his Life? nay on the contrary, does not the very Attempt to point out the Advantages of their lying in ſuch an Order, preſuppoſe the Agreement between the ſeveral Prophecies and the correſponding Circumſtances in his Life? It would be abſurd to argue upon any other Suppoſition: to pretend to rank thoſe Expreſſions in a Chain of Prophecies, which it did not appear, had any Manner of Claim to the Title of Prophecies. If therefore his Lordſhip anywhere

where denies that ſeparate Prophecies bear any Reſemblance to the Particulars of our Saviour's Life or Character; or in other Words, if he affirms, that by being diſtinctly conſidered they ceaſe to be Prophecies, it is not in Conſequence of his general Scheme that he does this; For that obliges him to no ſuch Declaration: neither in Fact could he make any ſuch without contradicting a main Part of his general Scheme. If you can bring him to deny that there are any diſtinct Characteriſtics of our Saviour in the prophetical Writings, I will venture to affirm, that he will ever after be ſilent about the beautiful and commodious Arrangement, in which ſuch Characteriſtics were delivered. It is abſurd to talk of forming a Chain, without firſt being poſſeſſed of the Links of which it is to be compoſed. Nothing but an accurate Inſpection into the particular Prophecies, could lead any one to diſcern that Uniformity of Deſign which runs through the Whole. In the Study of the Prophecies the ſame Method muſt be purſued, that has long been approved in treating all other Branches of Knowledge. That is, to begin by eſtabliſhing the Particulars. It is from mature Obſervation in theſe alone, that We can ever hope to aſcend to the more general Laws. But theſe once acquired, We can deſcend by the ſame Steps, and return with double Advantage to review the particular Caſes, when we ſee the Dependence they have on their more general Cauſes. It is then only, when we are able to take

take the whole Syſtem into our View, that we can ſee the Advantage of the Order they are placed in, and at once diſcern and account for the Propriety of aſſigning this particular Part to that particular Place. Should We be ſhewn a Set of Pictures, and be taught, without any Regard to the Order they are placed in, the particular Story contained in each, We might, no doubt, be very well entertained while we turned from one to another juſt as Chance ſhould lead Us. But ſhould We then be told that they all repreſented the different Actions of the ſame Perſon, and were placed in an hiſtorical Order, this would open to Us a Set of freſh Beauties that We were not before attentive to; We ſhould then ſee, that, as they ſtood, each following one received Light from thoſe that went before, and that to conſider them in any other Order would diſturb and ruin the whole Deſign. Yet this new Light does not deſtroy the ſeparate Repreſentations. They are as ſtrong as they were before, and more pleaſing when their Relation to the reſt is taken in, than when they were conceived to be ſingle and independent Pieces. With Regard to the Prophecies of the Meſſiah, when We conſider them ſeparately, We eaſily diſcover in them ſtrong and clear Images of our Saviour. Does He, who ſees them in a connected State deſtroy theſe Images? Or if he ſhould pretend that his View of them gives new Force and Beauty to each, which are not to be perceived by him who conſiders them barely in a broken disjointed State,

is ſuch a Pretence to be conſtrued, as a Deſign to blot out the Likeneſs that was before found to be in each particular Prophecy? The candid muſt think otherwiſe of ſuch an Attempt. They will think the Deſign calculated to improve, not to weaken, theſe particular Reſemblances.

THERE may and muſt be, in a Character ſo diſtinctly delineated in Prophecy as is that of our Saviour, ſeveral minuter Circumſtances pointed at, which are not amongſt the grand Characteriſtics, and inſeparable Privileges of the Meſſiah, and which do not therefore belong to him alone. Theſe conſidered diſtinctly and ſeparately loſe much of their Force. A Prophecy ſays that the Meſſiah was to be a Deſcendant of *Judah*. This happened to our Saviour, but it did not happen to him only. Therefore this Prophecy independently conſidered, is of too looſe a Nature to be of any Aſſiſtance to Us in diſtinguiſhing the Meſſiah when he ſhould come. 'Tis true it excludes many from that Title, but it alſo admits many to it; and if we ſhould liſten to its ſingle Voice, we ſhould have a whole Tribe of Meſſiahs. But conſider this as foretold of the ſame Perſon, who was to be born of a Virgin, who was to do all Kinds of Miracles, who was to be put to Death, and to be raiſed from the dead, and in whom ſeveral other ſpecial Circumſtances were to meet, it then becomes a forcible Evidence, and greatly contributes to fix the Character of the Meſſiah on the proper Perſon; it receives Strength from the Reſt of the Prophe-

cies, and adds Strength to them. There could ſcarce be one ſingle Circumſtance in our Saviour's Perſon or Actions fixed upon, which though foretold in the cleareſt and moſt expreſs Terms, could have been ſtrong enough to give him, in the Opinion of Men, an unexceptionable Right to the Title of the Meſſiah. Try this upon his Power of working Miracles: *That* many of the Prophets enjoyed in ſome Degree, and many of his Diſciples gave aſtoniſhing Proofs of. He was a Man of Sorrows and acquainted with Grief, underwent great Sufferings though innocent: Will this point him out to Us to be inconteſtably the Man? All Hiſtory can witneſs that He is not the only innocent Sufferer. Nay try the Experiment upon thoſe Marks which were moſt peculiarly his own, his Miraculous Conception, or his glorious Reſurrection. If We could only have traced the Meſſiah, by any One of theſe ſingle Points of him, in the prophetical Writings, what Objections would not have been raiſed againſt our Lord's Right to this glorious Title! How would the Infidel have triumphed over the Secrecy of his Conception! And what Acceſſion of Strength would have followed thoſe weak and malicious Exceptions to the Truth of his Reſurrection! If then the moſt eminent Marks common to our Saviour with the Meſſiah of the Prophets, be too weak, when they ſtand alone, to eſtabliſh him beyond Contradiction the ſame, and if they loſe their Force by being ſeparately applied, every other under-Circumſtance

cumſtance muſt proportionably loſe more of its Force, as its natural Power to withſtand the Violence offered it is leſs.

DESCRIPTIVE Definitions are always to be viewed intire. If you diſunite the Parts of them and yet make uſe of every Circumſtance thus independent, they will by no Means enable You to find out the Individual they were intended for, though they would readily do it when collected. If we had a Portrait given Us to find out by it the Perſon it was intended to repreſent, we ſhould compare it intire with the Perſons that offered themſelves to our Notice; and when We found one whoſe Face and Proportions it exactly reſembled, we ſhould conclude him to be the Man we were in Search of. But if, inſtead of this Method, we ſhould cut the Piece into as many Parts as there were Limbs or Features, and then look upon every ſmall Section as a compleat Teſt of the Original, into what endleſs Miſtakes ſhould We be led! And yet in one Caſe the Reſemblance between the ſeveral diſtinct Parts is the ſame as in the other, but We ſee the Advantage of laying them all together, For the Correſponding of this one Part is a Proof that all the reſt are not miſapplied.

How then did our Saviour and his Apoſtles proceed, in applying to his Perſon the Characters of it, that were exhibited in the prophetical Writings? It cannot be ſhewn that our Saviour has ever recommended the Uſe of any one particular Prophecy, excluſive of others, to the Attention

of thoſe whom he was deſirous of leading to a Faith in him. And till this be ſhewn, I ſee not how it can be laid down as his Senſe of Prophecy, that any one particular Prophecy, much leſs that every particular Prophecy, is of itſelf a ſeparate and diſtinct Proof of the general Truth of Chriſtianity. He has indeed applied to himſelf particular Prophecies, and aſſured Us that they received their Completion in ſome Part of his Life or Sufferings. But he has no where reſtrained the Proof of his Meſſiahſhip to any one of theſe, nor aſcribed to them a ſeparate Power of proving him to be *the Chriſt*. His Conduct was all along the very Reverſe of this. He did not think that the fulfilling of any one Prophecy, or any Set of them, was ſufficient to evince the Truth of his Miſſion. He thought that nothing leſs than a full Completion of all the Prophecies was ſufficient for this great Purpoſe. He all along ſhewed a ſtrong Deſire of bringing about the Accompliſhment of ſtill more and more Prophecies; and when any human Endeavours were exerted that tended to prevent their further Accompliſhment, He expreſsly oppoſed them. When his Diſciples attempted to reſcue him from the Betrayer and the Company that attended him, He ordered them to deſiſt, aſſuring them that, if the Recovery of his Liberty had been agreeable to the Deſign he was carrying on, He wanted not the Means to effect it. [a] *But*

a Matt. 26, 54.

how

how then, he adds, *ſhall the Scriptures be fulfilled, that thus it muſt be?*

AND as He fulfilled all the Scriptures, ſo he never recommended any ſeparate Part of them, but the whole Volume, as a proper Foundation of their Faith, to others. When he endeavoured to bring others to a Belief in him, he did not refer them to this or that Prophecy as a full Evidence of his Truth, but bid them ſearch the Scriptures without Limitation for the Proofs of his Character and Miſſion, *for they are they*, ſays He, *which teſtify of Me*. When He reproved the Incredulity of the Two Diſciples in the Way to *Emmaus*, he did not think it ſufficient, for the raiſing and invigorating their Faith, to recapitulate ſome of the moſt eminent Prophecies concerning himſelf, and to urge them as ſo many different, independent Arguments for their believing, but, as one great, full, and powerful Argument, *Beginning at* Moſes *and all the Prophets, He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the Things concerning himſelf.*

THOSE whom He pitched upon to be his Witneſſes to the World, were ſuch as attended him through all the Scenes of his Miniſtry. They were not furniſhed with an imperfect Knowledge of it, nor admitted only to be conſcious of one or two predicted Events, but were acquainted with his Preaching, his Miracles, his Perſecution, his Death, Burial, Reſurrection, and Aſcenſion; For they were to give Evidence, not of a partial, but of a general Correſpondency between

tween his Life and the prophetical Plan of it. *And Ye alſo ſhall bear Witneſs of Me*, ſays He, *becauſe Ye have been with Me from the Beginning*. John 15. 27.

ACCORDINGLY the Evangeliſts are not contented with reciting only ſome of the moſt memorable Events in his Life, or with applying to it ſome of the moſt expreſs and important Predictions, but they lay before Us the whole Scheme of his Life and Doctrine, and ſeem careful to inform Us of ſome of the minuteſt Incidents in them, and to apply ſome of the more indirect Prophecies, which were more likely to eſcape the Notice of common Enquirers. *St.* Matthew *eſpecially has been ſo diligent in collecting the prophetic Teſtimonies of Chriſt, that there is ſcarce a ſingle Occurrence which ever happened to him, but what he ſhews to have been foretold by ſome Prophet*. So inſufficient a Foundation of a Chriſtian Faith did he think the fulfilling of any ſingle and ſeparate Prediction; ſo induſtrious has he been to diſplay to Us, in its full Force, the great Argument of the Whole Life of Jeſus, correſponding to the Whole Picture of it, drawn in the prophetical Writings. The ſame Deſign is viſible in the Writings of the other Evangeliſts. And will any one now object that they forgot this Deſign, when they ſhewed a Reſemblance between particular Prophecies and the particular Acts of our Saviour? How elſe could the general Agreement be made out, without ſhewing theſe particular Likeneſſes? To attempt this would

would be like attempting to ſhew the Reſemblance between a Face and a Picture, and yet owning that the ſeveral Features were not at all alike. To reconcile this Scheme to the Conduct of the Evangeliſts, one would think a Reaſon for their not applying more particular Prophecies would be expected, rather than a Reaſon for their applying ſo many. For it might be ſaid, that, if they wanted to ſhew Us this general Correſpondency, they ſhould have collected and applied the whole Body of the Prophecies. But neither was this requiſite. For the prophetical Writings were ſtill extant. When therefore they had drawn a compleat Account of the Tranſactions of Chriſt, they might ſafely leave it to Us, now poſſeſſed of both the correſponding Parts, to make the Compariſon. We might read in the Prophets all that the Meſſiah was to do and ſuffer: We might read in the Evangeliſts all that our Lord did and ſuffered: and therefore were not unfurniſhed with every Thing, that could ſatisfy Us in the Reality of the Likeneſs, which run through the whole. It might nevertheleſs be judged expedient that They themſelves ſhould point out the Reſemblance in ſome Particulars: either for the Benefit of thoſe, who might want Leiſure or Opportunity themſelves, to examine the Prophets, that ſuch might not be wholly unfurniſhed with this great Argument for the Truth of their Profeſſion; or for the Sake of applying ſome of the more obſcure Prophecies to their proper Events; or however it

was

was neceſſary that they ſhould lay in a Claim in Behalf of their Maſter, to his being that very Meſſiah ſpoken of by the Prophets. For otherwiſe it might poſſibly have been overlooked by the inadvertent Readers, or diſputed by the malicious, while they had this ſpecious Plea to back their other Objections, "If they had been "conſcious of the Completion of the Prophecies "in the Perſon of their Maſter, his Diſciples "could not have been guilty of ſuch Injuſtice to "his Cauſe as to neglect the Claim." This might have infuſed Doubts even into the diligent and well diſpoſed Enquirer; and therefore the Prophecies which ſtand recorded, and applied in the New Teſtament by the Hands of the Evangeliſts and Diſciples of our Lord, at once awaken the inattentive, ſilence the bold Objector, and adminiſter Confidence to the honeſt Heart. But ſuppoſing none of theſe Advantages had attended them, yet it is ſurely a very ſtrange Objection, to ſay that the general Reſemblance can be hurt, by a Reſemblance in ſeveral Particulars being already made out, and to oppoſe the Argument drawn from this general Reſemblance, by ſhewing that the Evangeliſts have long ago made great Advances towards proving the Reality of it. Eſpecially when we can add that they have in Effect fully proved it. For, as far as they have gone, they have ſhewed the Reſemblance to be perfect and undeniable, and having left us a full and true Portrait of our Lord, have appealed to the Scriptures for the Truth of the Reſem-

Reſemblance in thoſe remaining Parts, which they did not think it neceſſary, that they themſelves ſhould draw into a Compariſon. And in Truth, to do Dr. *M.* Juſtice, he ſeems not inſenſible of the Weakneſs of his Argument. For, after all the Pains he has taken to ſupport it, he has fairly given it up. He ſays: *But whatever Eaſe it may give to his Lordſhip in this particular Diſpute, to conſider Prophecy in ſo extenſive a View, yet, with Regard to the Service of Chriſtianity, I cannot ſee the leaſt Difference or Advantage in this Scheme, except in the greater Length of his prophetic Chain, than of that, which the Evangeliſts made Uſe of: For the Prophecies, as they are applied ſingly in the Goſpels, are all of them ſubſervient to one and the ſame Purpoſe of Providence, as well as in his Hypotheſis, but the Evangelical Chain which begins with* Moſes, *reaches only through ſeveral hundred Years; Whereas this Chain, which begins with* Adam, *reaches through ſeveral Thouſand.*[a] And is this Confeſſion come at laſt, and accompanied with this Reaſon, that He now ceaſes to oppoſe his Lordſhip's Scheme, becauſe he does not ſee that it carries in it any thing peculiarly ſerviceable to the Cauſe of Chriſtianity? Why then, we may aſk him, was all this Profuſion of Labour to make it appear inconſiſtent with the Goſpels? What, are the Prophecies, as applied in the Goſpels themſelves, all of them ſubſervient to one and the ſame Purpoſe of Providence, as much as in his Lordſhip's Hypotheſis,

a Examination, Pag. 23.

and is the Goſpel-Application of theſe Prophecies yet produced to ſhew this very Part of his Lordſhip's Hypotheſis to be Chimerical, and contradictory to the Notion of the Evangeliſts? The Man, who could endeavour to ſuſtain an Argument of this Kind, muſt ſurely attribute every thing to the Power of his Pen.

YET there is ſtill one Part of the Scheme in Queſtion, which He thinks might be of ſuperior Service to Chriſtianity, I mean the Length of the Biſhop's prophetic Chain. For, *with Regard to the Service of Chriſtianity, He cannot ſee the leaſt Difference or Advantage in this Scheme, except in the greater Length of his prophetic Chain.* I will not ſay that He reſolves for that Reaſon to maintain its Repugnance to the Goſpel Scheme: However he does maintain it. And that Reaſon will juſtify our Endeavours, to ſhew that He has yet produced Nothing from the Scriptures, to make a Difference acknowledged. He ſays that the Evangelical Chain begins with *Moſes*, and is therefore not ſo long as that for which his Lordſhip contends by upwards of 2000 Years. But laying aſide this Metaphor at preſent, as unconcerned in the Point of Diſpute we are now entring upon; what does he mean in plain Words when he ſays the Evangelical Chain reaches no higher than *Moſes?* I ſuppoſe, that there are no Prophecies, cited or referred to in the New Teſtament, which were delivered before the Time of *Moſes*. What then? does it follow, either that there were no Prophecies of the Meſſiah before the

the Time of *Moſes*, or that the Evangeliſts did not know of any? not unleſs ſome Neceſſity can be ſhewn for their having cited, or referred to all the Prophecies that they were acquainted with. The Proof of this has not yet been made out, and I am perſwaded will hardly be undertaken. Yet till it be made out, it muſt be allowed that the Evangeliſts might know and believe in Prophecies delivered before the Time of *Moſes*, though they have not cited them, and, this being admitted, that the Suppoſition of a Scheme of Prophecies, taking their Riſe much higher than the Time of *Moſes*, is no way contrary to the Perſwaſion or Opinion of the Evangeliſts. I have before given a Reaſon why it was not incumbent on thoſe who preached Chriſt, or were intruſted with the great Care of tranſmitting to Poſterity the Hiſtory of his Life, to apply all the Prophecies relating to the Meſſiah, that came within their Knowledge, to the ſeveral correſponding Paſſages therein. Namely, becauſe we were ſtill poſſeſſed of the prophetical Writings, and therefore were Ourſelves capable of making the Application. I ſhall now further ſuggeſt a Reaſon, why it might ſeem particularly not neceſſary that they ſhould expreſsly refer to the moſt ancient Prophecies of the Meſſiah. Now theſe Prophecies were only of more general Import, the Conditions of the Times not requiring that they ſhould be more particular. They promiſed at large that a Meſſiah ſhould come, a Deliverer from thoſe great Evils under

which Humanity then laboured; but they did not deliver the Marks by which his Perſon was to be known, the Condition in which he was to appear, or the Manner in which he was to effect that Deliverance. No more was foretold to our Firſt Parents, than that one ſhould ariſe from the Seed of the Woman who ſhould triumph over their grand Enemy, and greatly repair the Loſſes their Race ſuſtained from their Tranſgreſſion. To *Abraham* it was promiſed that the Deliverer ſhould ariſe from his Seed. But this was all. Succeeding Prophecies were more particular. They pointed out all the ſeveral Characters of thoſe different Offices the Meſſiah was to ſuſtain; They determined the exact Time of his appearing in the World, the Place of his Birth, the Manner of his Life, the Nature of his Doctrine and Miracles, they painted the black Scene of his Sufferings and Death, the Circumſtances of his Interment, the Glory of his Kingdom, and, in a Word, they exhibited a View of all the various Scenes he paſſed through in his Abode on Earth, deſcribing many of the minuteſt Incidents that happened to him. The Nature then of the Prophecies delivered in the ſeveral Ages of the World being thus different, preſents Us with an obvious Reaſon, why the Evangeliſts in their occaſional Citation of Prophecies ſhould make Uſe of the later, and why they might forbear making any References at all to the moſt ancient. When they had, by adapting them to the Particulars of his Life, ſhewn

that

that the more circumſtantial Prophecies belonged to him, it followed that the more general Prophecies could belong to no one elſe. When it had been ſhewn that he exactly reſembled the moſt nice and finiſhed Draughts of the Meſſiah, what Occaſion to add that he alſo reſembled the more faint Outlines or Sketches? They made it appear that every minute Circumſtance, that was to meet in the Character of the Meſſiah, concurred in the Perſon of Jeſus: could there therefore remain any Doubt whether he were intended under the more general Denomination of the promiſed Seed? Sure there could not. For it being ſhewn that the Explanation belonged to him, that of which it was an Explanation muſt of Courſe alſo belong to him. This may ſerve as a Reaſon why the Evangeliſts did not expreſsly cite the moſt ancient of all Prophecies. It might have accounted for the Omiſſion too, ſuppoſing it had been proved, that none of the ancient Prophecies were ever referred to in the Books of the New Teſtament. For though they had both believed and acknowledged the Force of ſuch Prophecies, it appears from this View that it was ſuperfluous, at leaſt that it was not requiſite, they ſhould refer to them. But, I think, Dr. *M.* has by no Means proved, that there are no Prophecies referred to in the Goſpel, which were delivered before the Time of *Moſes*. He tells Us, *that it is affirmed by the Teſtimonies of all the Evangeliſts, how Jeſus himſelf conſtantly taught, that his Perſon and Character were particularly foretold*

foretold and marked out by Moſes *and all the later Prophets, as the Meſſiah, or that great Prophet who was to come.* In his Collections from the Evangeliſts for proving this, he has always marked theſe Expreſſions, Moſes *and the Prophets*, or *the Law and the Prophets*, in different Characters. I ſuppoſe therefore, by his thus diſtinguiſhing them, he intends that theſe Expreſſions ſhould convey an Argument, (for otherwiſe I find not the leaſt Shadow of an Argument for this Purpoſe) and would inſinuate that when the Writers of the New Teſtament refer to Prophecies as recorded in *Moſes*, or the Law, and the Prophets, they can only be underſtood to mean ſuch Prophecies as are not of an earlier Date than the Time of *Moſes*. The Enquiry then muſt be into the Senſe of theſe Expreſſions, as they were uſed by the Jews and Writers of the New Teſtament. By *Moſes*, when they ſpoke of him as a Writer, they underſtood not the Perſon or perſonal Speeches, but the Writings of *Moſes*. And not only that Part of his Writings whereof Himſelf and his own Acts are the Subject, but the whole Volume of his Writings. The Law, in their Uſage ſignified the ſame Thing, as appears from the well-known Diviſion of the Jewiſh Canon into the Law, the Prophets, and the Hagiographa. Therefore *Moſes and the Prophets*, or, *the Law and the Prophets*, were general Names for the whole Canon of Scripture. *The Five Books of the Law were divided into* 54 *Sections. This Diviſion many of the*

Jews

Jews held to be one of the Conſtitutions of Moſes *from Mount* Sinai. *But others, with more Likelihood of Truth, attribute it to* Ezra. *It was made for the Uſe of their Synagogues, and the better inſtructing of the People there in the Law of God. For every Sabbath-Day, one of theſe Sections was read in their Synagogues. And this we are aſſured, in the Acts of the Apoſtles, was done amongſt them of old Time.* Chap. 15. 21. *which may well be interpreted, from the Time of* Ezra. *They ended the laſt Section with the laſt Words of* Deuteronomy *on the Sabbath of the Feaſt of Tabernacles, and then began anew with the firſt Section from the Beginning of* Geneſis *the next Sabbath after, and ſo went round in this Circle every Year. ----- Till the Time of the Perſecution of* Antiochus Epiphanes *they read only the Law: But then, being forbid to read it any more, in the Room of the* 54 *Sections of the Law they ſubſtituted* 54 *Sections out of the Prophets, the Reading of which they ever after continued. So that when the Reading of the Law was again reſtored by the* Maccabees, *the Section which was read every Sabbath out of the Law ſerved for their firſt Leſſon, and the Section out of the Prophets for their ſecond Leſſon; and ſo it was practiſed in the Time of the Apoſtles. And therefore when* Paul *entred into the Synagogue of* Antiochia *in* Piſidia, *it is ſaid that he ſtood up to preach after the Reading of the Law and the Prophets,* Acts 13. 15. *that is, after the Reading of the firſt Leſſon out of the Law, and the ſecond Leſſon out of the Prophets.*[a]

a *Prid.* Con. Part 1. Book 5. Page 478. 10 Ed.

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We ſee then that all the Books of *Moſes* were read in the Synagogue-Service, and that this Reading is called, by St. *James*, the preaching of *Moſes*; (*For* Moſes *of old Time hath in every City them that preach him, being read in the Synagogues every Sabbath-Day*, Acts 15.21.) by St. *Luke*, the Reading of *the Law*. And therefore it is plain theſe Expreſſions cannot bear that confined Meaning which Dr. *M.* for the Sake of his Argument, would give them. Whence it follows that when our Saviour or his Diſciples appeal for the Truth of his Miſſion to *Moſes*, or the Law, it is not only an Appeal to the Prophecies which *Moſes* in his own Perſon delivered, but to all thoſe alſo that are contained in his Writings, though delivered originally by others, and in Times much elder than his own, and only recorded by him. And indeed this Notion of the Expreſſion is agreeable to the Cuſtom of Language prevailing amongſt Us at this Day. We uſe the Name of an Author for the Works of that Author, and refer to him for any thing contained in his Works, without any Hazard of being miſunderſtood. If any one ſhould ſay that there was a Prediction of the Greatneſs of the Roman Empire under *Auguſtus Cæſar*, delivered even before the Foundation of the City, and ſhould refer his Hearers for it to *Virgil*, I am perſwaded that He would be received with Contempt or Laughter as a low Quibbler on Words, or one ignorant of the moſt common Forms of Speech, who ſhould reply, that "it was impoſ-

"ſible

"ſible *Virgil* ſhould be the Author of ſuch a "Prophecy, for He lived not till the Days of "*Auguſtus*." But if Dr. *M.* will not yet conſent to give this Meaning to *Moſes*, or, *the Law*, let him be reminded, for the further Eaſe of his Scruples, that our Saviour himſelf uſes *Moſes*, and the *Writings of Moſes*, as ſynonymous Terms: *For had ye believed Moſes*, ſays He, *ye would have believed Me: For he wrote of Me. But if ye believe not his Writings, how will ye believe my Words?* [a]--that He alſo appealed for the Evidence of his Miſſion to all the Writings of the old Teſtament under the more general Name of Scriptures: *Search the Scriptures*, ſays he to the Jews, *for in them ye think that ye have eternal Life, and they are they which teſtify of Me:* [b] --that in a full Account we have of his perſwaſive Diſcourſe to draw his backward and diſpirited Diſciples to a Belief in him, he does not confine himſelf, in his Uſe of Prophecies, to any particular Part of the Scriptures, but ranges through the whole Compaſs of them, and gives the Argument compleat and in its full Extent: *He expounded unto them in all the Scriptures the Things concerning himſelf:* --- that *Zacharias*, in his Prophecy on the Circumciſion of his Son *John*, appeals to all the Prophets that *have been ſince the World began.* [c] As does St. *Peter* alſo in his Diſcourſe after having wrought the Miracle of healing the lame Man: *But thoſe Things which God before had ſhewed by the Mouth of all his Prophets, that*

a John 5. 46, 47. b John 5. 39. c Luke 1. 70.

Chriſt ſhould ſuffer, he hath ſo fulfilled. [a] And, *which God hath ſpoken by the Mouth of all his holy Prophets, ſince the World began.* [b] If therefore there were any Prophecies before the Time of *Moſes*, it cannot be ſaid that there is no Appeal to them in the Writings of the New Teſtament. And there are ſome Prophecies of that Antiquity whoſe Truth has not yet been diſputed: *Viz.* The Promiſe of God to *Abraham*, which is thrice repeated: [c] And the Prophecy of *Jacob* determining the Period in which the Meſſiah was to appear [d] *&c.* Nay, to take away all Poſſibility of Suſpicion that the Writers of the New Teſtament owned no Prophecies elder than the Times of *Moſes*, this very Prophecy to *Abraham* is expreſsly cited and applied by them. Thus *Zacharias*, in the Prophecy above-mentioned, calls God's Promiſe to ſend the Meſſiah, the Mercy promiſed to our Fathers, and the Oath which he ſware to our Father *Abraham*. And Saint *Peter*, in the Concluſion of that Diſcourſe before referred to, quotes and explains the ſame Prophecy. *Ye are the Children of the Prophets*, ſays He, *and of the Covenant which God made with our Fathers, ſaying unto Abraham, and in thy Seed ſhall all the Kindreds of the Earth be bleſſed. Unto you firſt, God, having raiſed up his Son Jeſus, ſent him to bleſs you, in turning away every one of you from his Iniquities.* [e].

a Acts 3. 18. b Verſ. 21. c Gen. 12. 3. 18. 18. 22. 18. d Gen. 49. 10. e Acts 3. 25, 26.

It appears then to be a very falſe Account of the Extent of thoſe Prophecies which were referred to, or applied by our Saviour and his Apoſtles, that makes them reach no higher than the Times of *Moſes*. And therefore Dr. *M.* has not ſhewn that there is ſo great a Difference, between the Length of the Evangelical Chain and that laid down by his Lordſhip, as he has aſſerted there is; nor, indeed, that there is any Difference at all. For his whole Streſs being laid upon an imaginary Limitation, which has been ſhewn to have no Place in Scripture, that being removed, his whole Objection vaniſhes, and there is Nothing to hinder their being equally extended. Of Conſequence, this being, by his own Confeſſion, the only Difference between them which there was any Grounds from Scripture to inſiſt upon, when this Difference is taken away, it muſt be allowed, that, notwithſtanding any thing yet alledged to the contrary, the Notion of a Scheme of Prophecy beginning from the Time of *Adam*, and the Manner of arguing from one intire View of the whole Body of the Prophecies, may be eſteemed agreeable to the Opinion and Practice of our Saviour and his Diſciples, as they appear to Us in the Writings of the New Teſtament.

But We have not yet done with this formidable Objector. His laſt Appeal was to Scripture againſt Reaſon, He now appeals to Reaſon againſt Scripture. He is reſolved it ſeems that the prophetical Chain ſhall be ſhorter at leaſt by one

Link than the Biſhop would have it. The Prophecy he attacks is that very remarkable one delivered to our Firſt Parents at the Fall, to be the Foundation of a religious Hope to them and many of their Deſcendants. He is ſenſible that by overthrowing the Credit of this Prophecy, one great Deſign of Prophecy for which the Biſhop is a ſtrenuous Advocate, muſt fall to the Ground with it. For had Prophecy been intended to ſupport the Faith and Religion of the old World, the Delivery of it at no other Time could have anſwered that End ſo well, as at that Period when ſuch a Support firſt became neceſſary. As long as it was deferred, wretched Man, deſtitute of all Hope towards God, muſt, during that ſad Interval, have been without any Religion at all. And therefore, this propereſt Occaſion of delivering it for that Purpoſe being neglected, the Concluſion would be, that Providence, in affording this Light of Prophecy to Mankind, had no ſuch View.

BIG with the Hopes of ſuch a Concluſion, He reſolves to ſtrike at once at the Root of Prophecy, and to ſhew the Hiſtory, out of which it grows, to be a mere Fable, a Dream or Invention of *Moſes*, without Foundation or even Poſſibility in Fact. We ſhall give his Reaſons for this bold Opinion a brief Conſideration. He endeavours the Proof of it then by ſhewing what great Difficulties attend the Hiſtorical Senſe. After We have done with theſe, We ſhall then conſider that Opinion which he thinks moſt

conſiſtent

conſiſtent with Reaſon, and the Deſign of the Author.

THE Difficulties attending the Hiſtorical Senſe which he produces may be reduced to theſe Two Heads, Inconſiſtences in the Characters of the Actors, and Incredibilities in the Facts. Of the firſt Kind there is only one, but that a very comprehenſive, Inſtance. For it contains under it ſeveral particular Objections. It is this, That Man is repreſented in this Account as devoid of Reaſon. He proves it both from their Ignorance, and their Knowledge. From their Ignorance, of, what he calls, the primary End of their Creation, to propagate their Species. *For from this Hiſtorical Narration we find*, ſays He, *that during their State of Innocence they were utterly ignorant of this End.* [a] Let it be obſerved upon what his natural Law has taught him to be the primary End of Man's Creation, that it makes him principally created neither for his own Happineſs nor the Happineſs of others, but merely as an Inſtrument of giving Exiſtence to another Inſtrument, which was again deſigned to give Exiſtence to a third, and that to a fourth, and ſo on *in Infinitum*, without a Poſſibility of ever coming at any thing that was made for itſelf. And when ever We ſhould ſuppoſe a Period to be put to the human Race by God, He muſt be the Author of defeating his own Deſigns, by preventing his Works from anſwering that very End for which he created them: Since

a Page 104.

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it is plain that he takes from the laſt Set of Men all Opportunity of being the Inſtruments he intended them for. The ſame Charge of vain and fruitleſs Creation will by this Scheme be thrown upon God for taking out of the World ſo many in an Infant or unripe State; and the Imputation of oppoſing the Purpoſe of their Creator, on all thoſe who have preſerved themſelves through Life in an unſpotted Purity. The Neglect of this then in our Firſt Parents, might not have been ſo heinous an Inſtance of their Inattention to the Voice of Reaſon, as he would have it thought, nor ſo unpardonable a Deviation from the Path of Nature. And therefore if it ſhould be ſaid that, for ſome Time after their Creation, their Thoughts were wholly employed on the beſt Means of ſecuring their own Happineſs, without once being turned on the Increaſe of their Species, it may perhaps be judged but a weak Argument of the utter Extinction, or rather Abſence of all natural Law in their Minds. But how does he know that they were ſo utterly ignorant of this End? becauſe *Moſes* has not ſaid that they endeavoured to obtain it? why might not ſuch Endeavours be ſuſpended? or why might not *Moſes* forbear to intimate their Senſe of this End as foreign to his Purpoſe? I am apt to think that they, who object this, are only ſorry that *Moſes* has not mentioned their Senſe of it, becauſe they are deprived of a fairer Opportunity of ridiculing him. As a further Inſtance of their Want of Reaſon he tells Us, *that*

they

they did not know their own Nakedneſs till they were expelled out of Paradiſe. There is certainly a ſtrange Oppoſition to the Senſe of Mankind in this Author, that he is for having every thing figurative which others underſtand literally, and is reſolved to ſtick cloſe to the Letter there only where others agree to depart from it. However if the Expreſſion, he founds this Objection upon, is to be underſtood literally, it proves not their Want of Reaſon, but of Sight. To ſpeak freely then: is not the Objector ſomewhat unhappy in the Two Inſtances of Rationality he has pitched upon? Suppoſing *Moſes* had foreſeen the Objection, and, in Order to obviate it, had expreſſed himſelf as this Doctor would direct him. "And that you may be convinced "this Pair were endued with Reaſon in *Paradiſe*, "they gave Proofs both of a natural Deſire to "propagate their Species, and of their Faculty "of ſeeing." Would this Proof have ſilenced the Objector? or would he not rather have been the firſt to cry out, "I could by the very ſame "Means prove every Individual in the Brute Crea-"tion a Reaſonable Creature."

His Proofs of their Want of Reaſon from their Knowledge follow next. *The natural Law could not teach them,* he ſays, *that the Fruit of a Tree would inſpire Knowledge; or that the Knowledge of Good and Ill could be criminal or hurtful.* I ſuppoſe his Argument is this; theſe were Inſtances of Knowledge above the Reach of Reaſon, and therefore they, who had this Knowledge,

ledge, wanted Reaſon. We ſhall not ſtand to diſpute it with him, for neither of theſe are ſuch Inſtances. They did not know that the Fruit of a Tree would inſpire Knowledge. *Eve* indeed was ſo weak as to believe this on the Credit of the Tempter: but, if to be impoſed on by the Devil working in Concert with our Luſts ſhews a Want of Reaſon, ſure none of Us will have the Hardineſs to claim it. And, unhappily for the Objector as to the next Inſtance, they were ſo far from knowing that the Knowledge of Good and Ill would be criminal or hurtful, that before the Experiment of Eating, they believed the direct contrary. Nothing was painted in the Imagination of *Eve* but Scenes of Happineſs. For ſure they would never have fallen, had they known that Crime and Hurt was all they ſhould get by it. But this Piece of Knowledge was reſerved for their Hours of Reflection and Penitence. And even then they would not impute their Crime or Puniſhment to any Enlargement of Knowledge, in the vain Expectation of which they were grievouſly diſappointed, but to their Tranſgreſſion of the divine Command. He adds, *nor was it the Light of Reaſon which directed them to hide themſelves from the Sight of God among the Trees.* I agree with him. It was the Darkneſs of their Reaſon. Guilt had introduced Diſorder and Confuſion into their Minds, and they weakly ſtrove to hide themſelves from the Sight of that God whom they were afraid to behold. Sin in many yet ſeeks the Shade. And if ſome of the

the bolder Sinners of our Age have got over this Weakneſs, and dare oppoſe God in open Day-Light, it proves not their ſuperior Reaſon but their more hardened Impiety. He goes on to obſerve that *the ſame Law, which inſtructed* Adam *to give Names to the Beaſts proper to their ſeveral Natures, would have taught him at the ſame Time, that they were all dumb, and that the Uſe of Speech was the peculiar Privilege of Man. And therefore if* Eve *had had any natural Reaſon, She muſt have been ſhocked and ſurprized when one of the loweſt of thoſe Beaſts began to hold Diſcourſe with her.* As for *Adam*'s Part, after this Proof of his great Sagacity, in adapting the Names of the Creatures to their proper Natures, which he himſelf has produced, who will believe him when he ſays that *Moſes* has repreſented him as devoid of Reaſon? And for *Eve*, how does he know that She was not aſtoniſhed at the Diſcourſe of the Serpent? In ſo ſhort an Account as *Moſes* gives of this Tranſaction, an obvious Reaſon may be given for his making no Mention of it. For he would chooſe to omit thoſe Circumſtances of all others, to the Knowledge of which his Readers muſt naturally be led by the reſt that he deſcribed. This is the Manner of the moſt admired Writers. And ſure, if we ſuppoſe that *Eve* knew the Serpent to be naturally dumb, the Hiſtorian muſt have written for Readers of a very dull Apprehenſion, if, after telling them that the Serpent ſpoke articulately and rationally to *Eve*, he had thought it neceſſary to

add, that *Eve* was ſurprized. But we do not know in Fact that *Eve* was well acquainted with the Nature of all the Beaſts. At leaſt the Account, he has produced for that Purpoſe, is far from ſhewing it. For that great Review of the Brute World was held before She was created.[a] And therefore if there be any inconſiſtent Oppoſition in theſe Two Paſſages it depends on this Foundation, *that a Knowledge of the Natures of all the Beaſts was infuſed into* Eve *before She exiſted.* He tells us laſtly on this Head, that *when the wonderful Works of the Creator had convinced our firſt Parents of his infinite Power and Wiſdom and Goodneſs, the natural Law could not inform them, That there was another inviſible Being in the World, of an oppoſite Nature, abſolutely wicked, malicious, and endued likewiſe with great Power; which he was perpetually employing, to defeat all the Good and Happineſs, which God had provided for his Creatures:* If the Account of *Moſes* does lead us to believe that our Firſt Parents were acquainted with theſe two great Points, there needs no more than this to overthrow all that he has advanced, or can advance on this Subject. For almoſt the whole of his Objections againſt the common Acceptation of this Account are intended to ſhew, that there is not the leaſt Ground in the whole Story for our believing that they had any Notion of either of them. Can He ſay, *that in the whole of this Hiſtorical Narration* (as the Sharpneſs of his Wit prompts him often to

a See Gen. 2. 19 &c.

call

call it) *we cannot diſcover the leaſt Trace of any natural Law, nor of any Religion which Reaſon could teach?* and can He in the very next Page add, as what the Narration alſo leads him to, that *the wonderful Works of the Creator convinced our Firſt Parents of his infinite Power and Wiſdom and Goodneſs?* What can ſhew more fully our Strength of Reaſon, or what indeed was our Reaſon chiefly given us for but to lead to this very Truth? Can he again ſay, that there is Reaſon from the Hiſtory to imagine, that *they had a Knowledge of another inviſible Being oppoſite to the divine Nature, abſolutely wicked and malicious?* and can he afterwards aſſert that *to ſuppoſe the Devil concerned in the Temptation, is not only void of all Support from the Text, but contradictory to the expreſs Senſe of it?* When he can Support theſe oppoſite Points, then I ſhall readily agree with him that the whole Story is a Fiction, and a groſs Impoſition on the Credulity of Mankind. If then he will grant that the Hiſtory makes our Firſt Parents poſſeſſed of that Degree of Knowledge he here objects to, he contradicts himſelf, and the Diſpute is at an End. But if he be of Opinion that there is no Foundation in the Text hiſtorically underſtood for admitting this their Strength of Reaſon, or this their Belief of an evil Spirit, how impertinently are they then introduced to make the Text, thus underſtood, ſpeak Inconſiſtences with itſelf?

I will add a general Reflection on this his Opinion, which I deſire the Reader to carry along

in his Mind. His Aſſertion that the Text makes our Firſt Parents devoid of all Reaſon and natural Law, and that all Things in the Paradiſiacal State appear to have been ordered miraculouſly and ſupernaturally by the immediate Interpoſition of God, [a] will make it hard for him to account for its being a moral Fable. For by this Account, they could be no moral Agents, neither therefore could they ſin: or if it be inſiſted upon, that notwithſtanding this they ſtill might ſin, then, ſince they were intirely under the Direction of God and Revelation, their Sin will be chargeable on God alone. And how ſuch an Example, of Perſons either wholly incapable of ſinning, or ſinning only under divine Direction, could have any Tendency to promote Morality, I leave every one to judge.

We ſhall paſs on to the next Claſs of Difficulties attending the hiſtorical Senſe, *viz.* Incredibilities in the Facts.

But it is Time to obſerve, that this Author has very unſkilfully endeavoured to draw in, as a Part of the Queſtion *whether the Story be Hiſtorical or Fabulous*, that which is quite another diſtinct Queſtion, *what is to be underſtood by the Serpent in the Prophecy ſuppoſing the Story Hiſtorical.* If it can be proved that the Story is Hiſtorical, and that we are to believe the Tranſactions related by *Moſes* really and truly to have happened in the Order in which he relates them, then is the Time to conſider in what Light this will ſet

[a] Page 104.

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the Prophecy, and with what View it could be given. When we have once ſatisfied ourſelves that there were really ſuch Perſons as *Adam* and *Eve* once happy in Paradiſe, and that an apparent and actual Serpent was inſtrumental in ſeducing them from their Innocence and thereby from their Happineſs, then We may proceed to enquire whether *Moſes* points out to Us any other concealed Agent behind the Serpent. For we muſt be agreed upon this that the whole is a Relation of real Facts, before we can ever hope to determine, whether from a View of the whole as a Relation of real Facts, the Serpent is to be eſteemed the principal Tempter, or whether he was only actuated by an inviſible Being who judged him fit for his Purpoſe. I ſhall therefore, omitting the latter of theſe Enquiries as beſides my preſent Argument, confine myſelf wholly to the firſt. For it is ſaid that there is here a Prophecy. And it is undeniably true that, if *Moſes* deſcribes Realities, there is a Prophecy. This for good Reaſons has been long believed to be a Prophecy of the Meſſiah. Now when it is objected to this that *Moſes* only relates a Fable, what Part of our Opinions are We thereby challenged to defend? Surely that alone which is oppoſite to the Poſition of our Adverſary, that *Moſes* relates the Truth. If We poſſeſſed a Town, and the Enemy had raiſed a Battery againſt it, where would we employ our Care? Surely we ſhould defend thoſe Parts of our Fortifications that the Enemy attacked. For though

though they aimed to diſpoſſeſs Us of the Town, yet they attack our Works, knowing that if theſe can be beaten down, all within them is of Courſe their own, and we on the contrary defend them, knowing as well that while they are defended the Town is ſecure. Thus that there is a Prophecy here, and that this Prophecy relates to the Meſſiah, can only be maintained ſo long as we can defend the Reality of this Hiſtory. And if that be given up, it then falls, not as a Part of this Propoſition, that *the Hiſtory is real*, but as a Conſequence of it. For thus the whole Argument ſtands.

The Account which *Moſes* gives of the Fall is a true Hiſtorical Account,

Therefore theſe Words, *it ſhall bruiſe thy Head, and Thou ſhalt bruiſe his Heel*, contain a real Prophecy.

Then follows.

This Prophecy cannot conſiſtently be underſtood as conveying only the unſerviceable Proſpect of ſome fortuitous Encounters between the Race of Men and Serpents,

Therefore it conveyed the general Knowledge of a Redeemer, who was to repair the Loſs human Nature ſuſtained by the Fall, and to gain at laſt a compleat Victory over that very Enemy by whom our Parents had then been overcome.

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An Opponent may perhaps deny the Antecedent in each Propoſition, I think he cannot deny the Conſequence in either. But now it is plain that the Antecedent of the Second cannot be diſputed upon, with any Reaſon, till we are agreed about the Antecedent of the Firſt. For 'tis idle to wrangle about what Senſe We ſhall give the Prophecy, when we are not yet agreed whether or no it be a Prophecy. But that it is a Prophecy is you ſee the Conſequence of the firſt Propoſition, and muſt therefore of Neceſſity ſtand or fall with it. Whence it is that That alone muſt be handled and decided e'er We proceed to the Second. If the firſt be overthrown, the ſecond falls with it, for it is founded on a Conſequence from the firſt. But if the firſt be found true We are then at Liberty to proceed. Our Way lies over it, if it fails Us we can go no further. But if it bears, nothing hinders Us then to advance and try the Solidity of the ſecond.

I have been thus particular in explaining this Point, leſt it might be thought that a material Part in the Defence of the Argument was omitted, by paſſing over without Notice the Objections which this Author has thrown out obliquely againſt the Senſe his Lordſhip with moſt learned Men hath given this Prophecy. The preſent Queſtion is, whether the Account of the Fall be an Hiſtory or a Fable, Let us therefore attend to this alone. I know he diſputes againſt all in a Breath, but this is not for the Advantage of Truth. For it tends only to embarraſs

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and render the Matter more intricate: It entangles us as we go along, and We waſte our Strength in ſtruggling through the perplexed Path, without being able to make any proportionable Advances towards Truth.

Let us ſee now what Incredibilities are charged upon the Facts of this Narration. The Inſtances which are pronounced to be irreconcileable to the Notion of a true Hiſtory are ſummed up in the following Manner. *The Plantation of a Paradiſe for the Habitation of Man*; *The Tree of Life, and the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, in the Midſt of it*; *the Expulſion of him out of it after his Fall*; *The Cherubim and flaming Sword placed as a Guard to it*; *God coming down to walk in it in the Cool of the Day*; Adam *hiding himſelf among the Trees from the Sight of God*; *The Diſcourſe of the Serpent*; *and the Curſe pronounced upon him by God, and upon the Ground alſo itſelf*; *muſt all be conſidered as a mere Eaſtern Fable.*[a] Since the Examiner has not thought fit to give us any other Reaſon for the Neceſſity of conſidering them in this Light, than barely ſaying that they muſt be thus conſidered, it might be ſufficient to oppoſe Aſſertion to Aſſertion, and ſay that they muſt be conſidered as Facts. However, becauſe Dr. *M*'s Authority would be judged ſuperior, we ſhall take a ſhort Review of the Circumſtances here thrown together, and endeavour to ſhew, in a more ſatisfactory Manner, that this Neceſſity is groundleſs. It cannot ap-

a Page 136.

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pear ſtrange if in a Deſcription of the World, while itſelf and its Inhabitants were ſo very different from what they are at this Day, we meet with ſome Scenes of which the preſent State of Things can furniſh us with no Reſemblances. And if, for this Reaſon, and for the Shortneſs of the Account given of it, we cannot arrive at a full Knowledge of the Nature of all Things in it, nor a clear Conception of the Manner in which ſome Actions were performed, it cannot be juſtly wondered at. But while we own ſome Obſcurities in this Hiſtory, it muſt at the ſame Time be confeſſed, that there is not a ſingle Circumſtance in it which is abſolutely incredible, or which could not poſſibly have been. And if there be a Poſſibility of Things having appeared under that Form, and having happened in the Manner in which they are repreſented, all the reſt depends upon the Hiſtorian. That Poſſibility alone is ſufficient to reſcue it from being condemned to the Claſs of Apologues or unnatural Fictions, and it is alſo ſufficient to vindicate its Truth if it be attended with a ſufficient Strength of Authority in the Relater, and if it ſeems more conſiſtent with his Deſign to eſteem it a true Hiſtory. The Queſtion of the natural Credibility or Incredibility of Things is decided, if it be acknowledged that they might exiſt: that ſuch Things did exiſt muſt depend, no longer on their Nature, but ſolely on the Evidence offered in Proof of their Exiſtence. If then it appears that every Circumſtance in the

Hiſtory of the Creation and Fall might poſſibly be true, all Objection from the Nature of Things againſt their being true is anſwered, and the Remainder of the Enquiry muſt turn wholly on the Authority and Deſign of *Moſes*. His Authority has not here been called in Queſtion, and what has been advanced with Regard to his Deſign ſhall ſhortly be conſidered. At preſent the Nature of the Things demands our Attention. The Circumſtance he has placed firſt, amongſt thoſe which he thinks determine this Account to be fabulous, is *the Plantation of a Paradiſe for the Habitation of Man.* We are not to transfer any unworthy Image to God's Manner of forming this Garden from the Word *Plantation* here made uſe of. It ſignifies no more than that ſuch a Garden was formed by God, without defining the Manner in which it was done. It is applied here, becauſe the common Manner of forming Gardens amongſt Us is by Plantation. Surely then there can be no Difficulty or Incongruity in conceiving that a Place of ſuperior Beauty and Delight was prepared for the firſt Reception of Man. It will not be ſaid that God wanted Power to do this. The Vegetable Creation was obedient to his Word, and he could aſſemble the Parts of it in whatever Manner it ſhould pleaſe him for the Service of his Will, and the Accommodation of, his yet Favourite Creature, Man. The Exiſtence of a Tree of Life is as eaſily conceived as that of a Paradiſe. For the Production of it alſo depended on the Power of God.

God. And We cannot ſay that its Production was improper, if we will grant God the Liberty of beſtowing his Favours in what Manner he ſhall think fit. In like Manner We cannot object to the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, but by preſcribing to the Creator what Teſt of Obedience he ſhall require from his Creatures. If we admit the Plantation of a Paradiſe for the Habitation of Man during his Innocency, We cannot find Fault with his Expulſion out of it when he had render'd himſelf unworthy longer to enjoy the Pleaſures and Benefits of it. And having expelled him out of it, God might prevent his Return to it by whatever Guard he ſhould think proper to appoint. What Quarrel can any one have with their hearing the Voice of the Lord God walking in the Garden in the Cool of the Day, except it be againſt the Expreſſion? The Actions of God cannot be otherwiſe ſpoken of than in Terms taken from human Actions. And therefore if his ſenſible approaching be ſignified by the ſame Word which expreſſes the Motion of a Man, it is becauſe human Language cannot ſupply a better Expreſſion. We have before ſpoken of *Adam*'s Attempt to hide himſelf amongſt the Trees from the Sight of God, as the natural Effect of that Confuſion of Mind which Sin and the Terror of Puniſhment had thrown him into. Had he been repreſented as effectually eluding the all-piercing Eye of his Judge, the Objection would have been ſtrong; but the vain Attempt to do this is no more than the fooliſh

Cowardice of Guilt; which belongs to it, and which, even to ſhort-ſighted Man, often betrays inſtead of hiding it. A Serpent ſpeaking, is what we would not give Credit to, no more than to any of the foregoing Circumſtances, but upon the beſt Authority. However it cannot be thought incredible by thoſe who hold the Exiſtence of inferior Spirits good and bad, and who, believing the Scriptures, acknowledge that they have a limited Power not only over Beaſts but even over Men. The Curſe upon the Serpent and upon the Ground, though we could aſſign no Reaſon for them, yet would not furniſh any Charge againſt the Juſtice of God, ſince they are both his Creatures to be diſpoſed of according to his Will, except we could ſay, that, in puniſhing them, he changed their State againſt the Conditions of ſome Grant he had made them of continuing in it. But there can be no Room for Cenſure, when we conſider the latter as a Part of the Puniſhment of Man, and the former as a Memorial of his Fall, and a laſting Mark of God's Hatred of Sin. In a Word, there is Nothing here that can appear incredible to any one, who believes that the World was created, and is governed, by a divine Providence, who admits the Agency of Spirits, and who does not hold Nature immediately to be reduced to *an empty Name*, by allowing that *it is not only variable, but has been often actually varied at the Pleaſure of its Author*. [a]

a Page 172.

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LET us now ſee what Opinion theſe angry Attacks, upon that which is commonly received, were intended to make Way for, and what Kind of Scheme was deſigned to be ſet up, when the Hiſtorical ſhould be depoſed. We are not at all concerned to take the leaſt Notice of that Reaſoning which has been erected on a chimerical Suppoſition ſubſtituting *Sanchoniatho*, inſtead of *Moſes*, for the Author of this Hiſtory. The Enemies of the revealed Writings, when they find themſelves unable to injure them as they ſtand impregnable in their native Strength, may find a Pleaſure in ſuppoſing them weaker than they are, and may divert themſelves with thoſe imaginary Triumphs which ſuch a Suppoſition gives them an Opportunity of acting over in Thought. But it is a Suppoſition, which they can never ſeriouſly hope they will be allowed deciſively to argue upon. For it alone in a great Meaſure would determine the whole Queſtion in their Favour. The Facts related in this Account appear to be all poſſible. The Belief of their Reality therefore depends not on their Nature (for Nature's Voice is that they may be real) but ſolely on the Authority and Intention of the Writer. If we ſee Cauſe to conclude that his Intention was to deliver this as a Hiſtory of real Facts, and if his Authority be ſtrong enough to perſwade Us that He has faithfully executed his Intention, We muſt then admit the Account to be a true Hiſtory. But if his Authority is leſſened, its main Support is withdrawn, and the whole

whole Scheme falls to the Ground, we muſt conclude, either that he never deſigned his Account ſhould be received for Truth, or, if he did, that he aimed to deceive Us. Dr. *M.* is ſenſible of this, and ſets out with this fancied Advantage. *Let us now take a Review of this Story*, ſays He, *as if it had been told us by* Sanchoniatho. *And in this Way of conſidering it, the firſt Reflection which would occur is, that it was not poſſible for any Mortal, to give an hiſtorical Narration of the Events therein repreſented; or to deſcribe the particular Manner, Order and Time, in which, or the Materials out of which, this World, and its principal Inhabitants, were formed. We ſhould conclude at once, that the Whole, which the wiſeſt of Men could write upon ſuch a Subject, muſt be the mere Effect of Fancy and Invention.*[a] We ſee how joyfully he haſtens to his wiſhed for Concluſion. But ſhould we diſturb his Dream, and bid him recollect that *Moſes* was the Author of the Hiſtory, this his firſt Reflection, with all the Train that follows it, would vaniſh with his Viſion.

He endeavours to prepoſſeſs Us in Favour of this Suppoſition by introducing it, as one that muſt be acceptable to *all Lovers of Truth*, and under a Notion of doing ſtrict Juſtice to the Writings of *Moſes, by allowing them the ſame candid Interpretation which is commonly indulged to other ancient Writers.*[b] What would one now expect from theſe Profeſſions of Candour? would

a Page 128. b Page 118.

not

not one hope to find ſome tender Regard for thoſe Injuries with which Time equally affects all Writers? ſome favourable Allowances for thoſe Obſcurities, and uncommon Modes of Expreſſion, which Antiquity, and the Change of Language and Cuſtoms, muſt neceſſarily introduce? ſure one would hardly ſuſpect that this Pretence was made Uſe of to cover a Deſign of giving *Moſes* a Wound, where Length of Time has always ſhewn itſelf moſt merciful, in his Authority. Yet He entirely neglects the Diction, and that equitable Conſtruction of Language, for which alone the Plea of Antiquity can be urged, and goes on, after this ſpecious Preface, to traduce the Credit of *Moſes*, and to bring *his Hiſtory of the Fall and the particular Condemnation of the Serpent* down to the Level of *ſome Old Phœnician Story*.[a] Surely this is a Kind of Juſtice entirely new. When *Moſes* is to be treated with Candour and Impartiality, then he is diveſted of his divine Authority, and degraded to the Standard of ordinary Writers. A Judge, who, under a Pretence of doing ſtrict Juſtice, ſhould conſider the Evidence of a Man of approved Integrity as if it had come from one of ſuſpected Veracity, would only imitate him, who, pretending to lay aſide all Prejudice and Partiality, ſhould decide upon all Writings alike; and ſhould conſider the Hiſtory of an Author to whom divine Aſſiſtances were vouchſafed, as if it had been the Production of a common unaſſiſted Underſtanding.

a Page 119.

We will not therefore own Ourſelves indebted to the Candour or Generoſity of this Author, for granting *that this Account comes from* Moſes, *and that* Moſes *was commiſſioned by God to write it.*[a] Theſe are Points which have long been proved, and which muſt always be inſiſted upon. For if theſe be given up, We ſhall want that Authority in the Hiſtorian which is able to ſupport the Weight that is to be laid upon it. Since then the Facts related in this Story are all in themſelves naturally credible, and ſince the Authority of *Moſes* is of the higheſt Kind and ſufficient to induce a Belief of them when thus proved to be credible; in order to arrive at a clear Determination of the Queſtion, whether this Account of the Fall is to be eſteemed a Fiction or a true Hiſtory, the only remaining Enquiry will be, Which of the two Schemes is moſt conſiſtent with the Deſign of the Writer. To this, from which we were diverted by the Alarm given to the Credit of *Moſes*, let us now return. That we may not miſrepreſent Dr. *M*'s Opinion I will give it in his own Words. He ſays, *We cannot properly call it a Parable; For tho' a Parable be a mere Fiction, it is defined to be of ſuch a Sort, as muſt always be probable, or what might poſſibly be true! nor can it be an Hiſtory, for though it be a plain Deſcription of Facts, yet they are all apparently fictitious, and impoſſible to be performed in the Manner, in which they are deſcribed. What then are We to think of it? Why We may give it*

[a] Page 135.

either

either the general Name of an Allegory, by which a different Senſe is conveyed, than what is ſignified by Words: or we may call it rather an Apologue or moral Fable, the peculiar Character of which is, to relate Things and Events, impoſſible in their Nature: which is evidently the Caſe of the Narrative in Queſtion. [a] Again: *The Matter of the Story, whether it be inſpired or not, is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the Character of an hiſtorical Narration, and muſt ever convince all, who conſider it without Prejudice, that it is wholly fabulous or allegorical: and that* Moſes's *Commiſſion was accommodated on this Occaſion, as it is allowed to have been on many others, to the prevailing Taſte and Cuſtoms of the Nations around him; among whom the uſual Method of inſtructing or inculcating Truths, eſpecially thoſe of a ſublime and theological Kind, was by Fables and Allegories, which conveyed a ſummary Notion of the Doctrine propoſed to be taught, by a Way the moſt ſtriking and entertaining to the Generality of Mankind.*

Thus the Plantation of a Paradiſe for the Habitation of Man; the Tree &c. --- muſt all be conſidered as a mere Eaſtern Fable, from which no other Leſſon or Doctrine can be inferred, than what I have already [b] *intimated; that this World was*

a Page 124. b *Viz.* where he argues upon a Suppoſition of its coming from an uninſpired Writer. He ſays alſo: *I will grant it to come from* Moſes, *and that* Moſes *was commiſſioned by God to write it: yet this makes no Difference in the Caſe, becauſe the Matter of the Story, whether it be inſpired or not, is abſolutely inconſiſtent with the Character of an hiſtorical Narration.* Hence it appears that he adopts as his own Opinion, what he had ſaid of it under that View. And therefore we may hereafter make ſome

created by God; and that Man was happy in it, as long as he continued innocent, but forfeited his Happineſs and became wretched and miſerable, as ſoon as he became a wilful and habitual Sinner: This, I ſay, is the whole, which we can rationally collect from the Moſaic *Account of the Fall.*[a] We are all agreed therefore about this, that one great Deſign of the Author was, to inculcate certain very momentous moral Doctrines, ſuch as, that the World was created by God, and is governed by his Providence, that Man was happy during his Innocency, and was made unhappy by Sin. Theſe and many others this Hiſtory, admitted to be true, will teach as fully, and much more forcibly than when conſidered as an Allegory. If we are perſwaded of its Truth, we can no longer doubt of any of thoſe important Doctrines, which are thus, by divine Commiſſion, expreſſly and clearly delivered to Us. But a Thouſand Doubts and Perplexities will crowd into our Minds as ſoon as we admit it to be allegorical. We ſhall never know where to fix, or what to aſſent to, on ſuch ſlippery Ground: We ſhall be loſt amidſt a Variety of Interpretations, unable to determine whether we have yet penetrated to the Doctrines wrapped up under the Veil, or whether it may ſtill conceal ſomething far different from whatever we have yet conceived.

Obſervations upon it as it is profeſſed to be his private Sentiments: though it did not appear deſerving of Notice when conſidered as ſpringing from, and being eſtabliſhed upon, that abſurd Suppoſition. a Pag. 135 &c.

Theſe are, as this Author obſerves, the fundamental Points of all Religion, and of neceſſary Belief for the Reformation of a depraved World.[a] And therefore, to render them effectual, and to give them their proper Weight, they ought to have been delivered in the moſt clear and undiſſembled Manner, free from all Ambiguities and Equivocations, in all the commanding Force of ſimple and perſwaſive Truth, ſo as to leave the incredulous without Excuſe, and the honeſt and well-diſpoſed Mind without diſcouraging Suſpicions and Diſtruſts. An allegorical Shade muſt certainly throw ſome Degree of Obſcurity upon the Truths veiled under it. How near ſoever it may be made to approach to the Clearneſs of naked Truth, and how eaſy ſoever to the Apprehenſion, the naked Truth itſelf muſt ſtill be more clear, and more eaſy; becauſe its Clearneſs ariſes only from its nearer Approach to Truth. If any Part of the Diſguiſe remains, the Features of Truth cannot be ſo readily, or ſo ſurely known, as when the whole is removed. This muſt be thought a conſiderable Objection to the Allegorical Scheme. For We cannot help wiſhing that Allegory had had no Place in the Delivery of thoſe Truths which, of all others, ought to be made with the greateſt Clearneſs. It will be hard to aſſign any Advantage attending it to counterbalance this Objection. To ſay that it was made Uſe of in Conformity to the Jewiſh Manner of Writing is but a weak Reaſon for its

[a] Page 132.

Introduction here. It might indeed have carried ſome Appearance of Strength in it, if this Piece of Hiſtory had been deſigned for the Uſe of the Jews alone. But it was deſigned for the Information of many People and Nations, where the Eaſtern Manner of ſpeaking was neither known nor underſtood. The Doctrines it contains are the very fundamental Points of all Religion. Whoſe Obligation was to outlaſt the Genius of the Eaſtern People, to be extended to all thoſe to whom Providence ſhould pleaſe to open the Treaſures of his Revelation. Our Saviour has not inculcated theſe Doctrines afreſh to Us, and therefore he intended, no doubt, that we ſhould draw them from the *Moſaic* Spring. Since then the Jews made but a ſmall Part of thoſe, for whoſe Benefit this Account was given, however clear theſe Doctrines might have appeared to them in an allegorical Dreſs, We can hardly ſuppoſe that their Taſte alone would have been conſulted, and infinitely the more numerous Part neglected, ſince the ſimple Truth could not have been leſs clear to them, and muſt have been much more clear to all others.

THE Jews had in the Body of their Law, and in the Courſe of their Tranſactions a great Mixture of Types. But then there is not one of their moral Doctrines, which were deſigned to be of eternal Uſe and Obligation, like the Doctrines here delivered, that is thus removed from the Light. They were intended for common Uſe, and therefore their Light is common to all.

They

They are always expreſſed in plain and ſimple Terms, equally intelligible to all thoſe, for whoſe Inſtruction they were equally intended.

If, in inculcating Doctrines, the allegorical Scheme is much inferior to the literal in Point of Clearneſs, it falls ſtill much more beneath it in Point of Authority to inforce thoſe Doctrines. An Allegory may be contrived in an agreeable Manner to contain a Summary of Doctrines already known, but there can be very little Tendency in any Fable, eſpecially if it be an Apologue, to create or inforce a Belief of Points unknown or diſputed. When Things are related as they are, We cannot diſpute their Truth, without calling in Queſtion the Veracity of the Author. But we are taught to deny every Propoſition of an Apologue. And indeed the Author of an Apologue does not affirm any thing directly. The Doctrines he inculcates are ſeen only by a faint Kind of reflected Light. But if thoſe Doctrines are to be collected from Facts equally queſtionable, I ſee not how an Apologue can be made at all to affirm the Exiſtence of Facts. For Example in the Hiſtory before Us not only this Doctrine is to be taught, that *God is to be worſhipped as the Author of our Being and all we enjoy*, but alſo the Fact from whence it is drawn, *that God is the Author of our Being*. Now if this Account is made an Apologue, all Authority in it for our believing that Man was created by God, is at once undermined. The Words indeed affirm the Fact. But the Words do not contain

contain the true Mind of the Author. It is a Collection of Perſons and Actions imaginary and impoſſible, and We are by no Means to believe any one Propoſition as it there ſtands; nay on the contrary we are bound to deny them. It is true the ancient Sages, in laying the Foundations of Religion, and accounting for the Origin of Things, ſometimes fell into the Apologue. But this was not the Effect of Choice, but Ignorance. They did not give their Accounts this Form becauſe they thought it the moſt eligible, or the beſt fitted for teaching unknown Truths, but becauſe they themſelves wanted the Means of coming at the Truth. They therefore avoided the Appearance of it as induſtriouſly as poſſible, and did not deliver them in ſuch Colours as muſt at firſt Sight betray them for Fictions and the Sport of the Imagination; but they endeavoured to lay down Syſtems apparently rational, and ſuch as the Minds of Men muſt approve, and recommended them, not for the Entertainment of Mankind as mere Works of Ingenuity, but for their ſerious Perſwaſion and Belief, as the Dictates of Reaſon, or the venerable Truths of Tradition. They ſet them in what they eſteemed the moſt perſwaſive Light, and ſupported them by all the Strength of Authority they could procure. They always endeavoured to make them moſt reconcileable either to the common Opinions, or to the Reaſon, of Mankind, and therefore never fixed upon them any ſuſpicious Marks of Incredibility. None at leaſt that they

they apprehended would appear ſuch to the Perſons for whom they wrote, and diſcover them to be manifeſt Fictions to thoſe they deſigned to inſtruct. For what good Effects could they poſſibly produce amongſt a People perſwaded that they were falſe? Sure no Man would go ſeriouſly about to build a Syſtem of practical Doctrines on a Foundation, whoſe Weakneſs was not ſo much as diſſembled or concealed. Let us imagine ſome ancient Sage, who had at Heart the Reformation of Mankind, when he was endeavouring to eſtabliſh the Fundamentals of Religion, to have accompanied his Deſcription of the Origin of Things with ſuch a Declaration as this. "And now I hope none of You are ſo weak as "to believe that there is a Syllable of Truth in "what I have delivered to You. You muſt be "blind if you do not plainly ſee that it is a wild "and groundleſs Invention of my own, which I "neither believe myſelf nor deſire You to believe. "All I requeſt of You is to act as if every Thing "I have ſaid was true." Could he hope after this that the People would pay any great Regard to his Authority, or would effectually embrace the Belief of thoſe Doctrines he intended to draw from this Account for the Influence of their Practice? Certainly this Inſtance of his Sincerity would ruin the whole Deſign. Now if *Moſes* has fixed upon his Account of the Creation and Fall a Brand of Incredibility, if he has taken Care that it ſhall be attended with indiſputable Marks of Fiction, and every where carry

ry along with it its own Confutation, he has done what amounts exactly to the ſame with ſuch a Declaration. He does not ſpeak himſelf, but his Writings ſpeak for him, and call aloud to Us, "though I cannot aſſure You that God "created the World and Man, that Man was "happy in it while innocent, and became miſe-"rable by Sinning, yet be ye perſwaded to act "as if all theſe Things were ſo." So great muſt be the Defect of Authority in an Apologue for inforcing Doctrines, where Credit is to be given at once to the Doctrines, and to the Facts from whence they are deduced.

THOUGH we are all agreed that certain Doctrines of moral Uſe were deſigned to be inculcated by this Account, yet we do not agree with Regard to all the particular Doctrines that are contained in it. Thoſe who follow the literal Senſe aſſert, from the Hiſtory itſelf, that Man forfeited his Title to Happineſs by a ſingle Act of Sin, and that He loſt the divine Favour by the very firſt Violation of God's Commands. But this Allegoriſt ſays, that Man became wretched and miſerable not till he was become *a wilful and habitual Sinner*.[a] If this was the Opinion deſigned to be inculcated by it, allowing it an Allegory, ſure Nothing could be worſe contrived for the Purpoſe. The Command given to Man, to abſtain from the Tree of Knowledge of Good and Evil, was as follows. *Of every Tree of the Garden Thou mayeſt freely eat*;

a Page 137.

But

But of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, Thou ſhalt not eat of it: For in the Day that thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die. [a] Here We ſee Man is threatned to be puniſhed with Death on the very firſt Breach of the Command, and accordingly We find in the Third Chapter that he was no ſooner drawn into Diſobedience, than God came down to execute the Puniſhment he had denounced. Man is not queſtioned by his Judge whether he had been guilty of a Series of Crimes, but whether he had broken this ſingle Command. *Haſt Thou eaten*, ſays God, *of the Tree, whereof I commanded Thee, that thou ſhouldſt not eat?* [b] And upon his Conviction of this ſingle Crime, he is immediately condemned. Let him tell Us then by what Rules of Interpretation one ſingle Act of Diſobedience is to be taken, in an Allegory, for a Series; and how habitual Sin is figured in once Eating of a forbidden Fruit. This cannot be thought an unſerviceable Remark, becauſe if We admit that Man did not forfeit his Title to Happineſs as ſoon as he became a Sinner, We muſt alſo allow, that He was of himſelf able, by future Obedience, to attone for paſt Crimes; and that he had, as this Author inſinuates in the Perſon of ſome wiſe and ancient Reformer, after all his Sins and Depravity, ſtill in his own Power *the Means of recovering the divine Favour, and of reſtoring himſelf to his original Happineſs, by deſerting that beſtial Rule of ſenſual Pleaſure, which had beguiled*

a Gen. 2. 16, 17. b Chap. 3. 11.

him into a State of Sin and Miſery.[a] How repugnant ſuch an Opinion is to the Foundation of moſt Chriſtian Virtues, and the whole Scheme of our Redemption, I need not obſerve.

AGAIN. Thoſe, who believe this Hiſtory to be true, conclude from it, that there was a Tempter, diſtinct from the Man and Woman, concerned in the Fall. But this Allegoriſt ſays, that *the ſubtil Diſcourſe of the Serpent, which beguiled* Eve, *could mean Nothing elſe but the tempting Suggeſtions of Luſt and ſenſual Appetite, of which the Serpent was an Emblem; and that their Expulſion out of Paradiſe pointed out the natural Effects of Sin and Guilt, in depriving Man of his Happineſs, and plunging him into Miſery, Sorrow and Death. Which Account of the Matter,* he ſays, *is no other than what St.* James *himſelf gives of the natural Method, by which Men are uſually beguiled to debaſe the Purity of their Nature:* where he ſays, *but every Man is tempted, when he is drawn away of his own Luſt, and enticed: then, when Luſt hath conceived, it bringeth forth Sin: and Sin, when it is finiſhed, bringeth forth Death.*[b] James 1. 14, 15. This Paſſage is a general Deſcription, of the ordinary Manner and Effects of Temptations and their Conqueſts over Us; and it is not written with any particular Regard to the Sin of our Firſt Parents. But if it had, nothing could have been more applicable to the Hiſtorical Account of their Fall, and therefore it cannot give the leaſt Advantage to

a Page 132. b Page 133.

the

the Allegory. For St. *James* does not exclude an outward Tempter from having a Share in our Seduction, neither does *Moſes* exclude the Paſſions. On the contrary, the Apoſtle expreſsly deſcribes the Behaviour of different Men under *outward* Temptations, and the different Conſequences of it. In the 12th Verſe He calls that Man *bleſſed that endureth Temptation: For when he is tried, he ſhall receive the Crown of Life, which the Lord hath promiſed to them that love him.* And then he goes on to expoſe the Impiety of thoſe who, having failed under the Trial of Temptation, charge God, the Author of their Nature, with their Sin. *Let no Man ſay when he is tempted, I am tempted of God*[a] &c. telling them in the 14th and 15th Verſes as above, that their Sin and Miſery is chargeable on their own Folly alone, and their cowardly and baſe Submiſſion to the Suggeſtions of their own Luſt. The Hiſtorical View of the Fall is exactly agreeable to this. For it lies in this Order. Firſt the outward Temptation is mentioned, this communicates the Fire to the Luſts of *Eve* within, She weakly yields to her inflamed Deſires, ſins, and incurs the Penalty of Death. The Allegory therefore, by taking away the outward Tempter, by no Means renders the Deſcription of the firſt Sin more conſiſtent with St. *James*'s general Account of Temptation. But it certainly lays the Account itſelf under a very conſiderable Difficulty. In the ſixth Verſe of the third Chapter there is a

[a] Verſ. 13.

diſtinct Picture of the Workings of *Eve*'s irregular Paſſions. *And when the Woman ſaw that the Tree was good for Food, and that it was pleaſant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be deſired to make one wiſe; She took of the Fruit thereof* &c. Here is plainly an Indulgence of her rebellious Appetite: ſhe is pleaſed with the Beauty of the Fruit, her Mind drinks in the Infection, and raſhly believes it poſſeſſed of every Excellence that is falſely imputed to it; ſhe haſtens to ſatiate her Senſes, and obey her Deſires. If then, as Dr. *M.* would have it, *the ſubtil Diſcourſe of the Serpent alſo means Nothing elſe but the tempting Suggeſtions of Luſt and ſenſual Appetite*, then here is a double Account of theſe *tempting Suggeſtions*; they are deſcribed both in plain Language, and in an Emblem. This is certainly, to ſay the beſt of it, a very great Deformity in his Apologue. The ſame Difficulty is again repeated in his Explanation of the Expulſion out of Paradiſe. For *that*, He ſays, *points out the natural Effects of Sin and Guilt, in depriving Man of his Happineſs, and plunging him into Miſery, Sorrow and Death.* Now it is certain that theſe ſame *natural Effects* are ſpoken of alſo in plain Language. God threatneth *Adam*, that in the Day he ſinned he ſhould ſurely die. After their Sin, we ſee Pain immediately taking Poſſeſſion of their Minds, and the Conſcience of Guilt filling them with Shame, Diſtraction, and Fear of Puniſhment. And then we behold God himſelf dooming them to Puniſhment, and diſtinctly foretelling their Miſery,

Miſery, Sorrow, Labour, and Death. Here then will be alſo a double Deſcription of the Effects of Sin, the plain and emblematical. And, what is ſtill worſe, in this Circumſtance the plain Deſcription goes firſt; for it is not till after the Sentence paſſed upon the Sinners, that their Expulſion out of Paradiſe is related. So that when we have been inſtructed in all the fatal Effects of this Sin in the cleareſt and ſimpleſt Manner, we are then preſented with the Emblem of them: as if the Author, imagining he had been too explicit, intended to lead us back from Light to Darkneſs. Sure ſuch Profuſion of Language, and ſuch alternate Endeavours to ſhew and conceal the ſame Thing, does but ill agree with the Conciſeneſs and Elegancy of *Moſes*, or with the Nature of any one regular Deſign.

But let us now place this Account in another Point of View, and conſider it as deſigned to give Light into a very dark Part of Hiſtory. That it was written partly with ſuch a Purpoſe is, I think, plain, from its ſtanding as a very conſiderable and a very intereſting Part in that which is generally acknowledged to be an Hiſtory, the Pentateuch. I think it is undeniable that a true hiſtorical Account of the Creation and Fall would have anſwered every good Purpoſe that could be propoſed from the moſt ingenious Fiction, and would have been free from every Difficulty with which the latter muſt neceſſarily be attended. The Doctrines to be inculcated could not have been treated with equal Clear-

neſs

neſs in an Allegory as in an Hiſtory, nor could the Belief of the Facts, from whence the Doctrines were to be deduced, have been eſtabliſhed upon an equally firm Authority. What then could determine the divine Wiſdom, which inſpired this Account, to prefer that Manner of doing it, by which our Information and Benefit was leaſt conſulted? Why did he wrap up thoſe Doctrines in Obſcurity which were to be of conſtant and common Uſe? And why did he hide from Us the Knowledge of his having created the World and its Inhabitants, of his juſt Dealings with the Firſt of Mankind, his Bleſſing their Innocency and puniſhing their Diſobedience; why did he refuſe to give his Sanction to theſe Truths, and yet require from Us a firm and effectual Belief of them? Or, if it be ſaid that He did not enlighten the Hiſtorian in this Part of his Work, why did He here deſert him, and abandon him to his own Weakneſs, where alone his natural Abilities were moſt unſerviceable to him, where there were no Means of Knowledge to guide his Reſearches, and where no Force of human Genius could penetrate? Was it to try the Power of his Invention, and did the divine Spirit vouchſafe its Aſſiſtance in finiſhing an Hiſtory, and eſtabliſhing a Syſtem of Doctrines, which had no better Foundation than in that? If the Genius of *Moſes* had been left to work for itſelf here, it is moſt likely that He would have given Us thoſe Opinions which he had early imbibed amongſt the *Egyptians*, and would have drawn

drawn his Account of the Origin of Things from the ſame Fountain whence all his human Knowledge was derived. But certainly he was under the divine Direction here as well as in other Parts of his Works. And, if he was, ſince the Truth was fully known to the Holy Inſpirer, and ſeems in all Reſpects more fit to have been taught, what poſſible Reaſon can be aſſigned for preferring Fiction, or what Cauſe can we have for imagining that Fiction was preferred? Things might have been as they are related: How then can We know that they were not ſo? The Manner, in which the World and all Things in it were created, can be known to infinite Wiſdom alone; and ſince We have, under its Direction, a Creation deſcribed to Us, it is certainly the Height of fooliſh Preſumption to ſay that Inſpiration mocks Us, and does not give Us a true Account. The Account is given in plain deſcriptive Language, and gives us as clear a Conception of the Beginning and Progreſs of the Creation, and of the Fall of Man, as Words can give: and the Hiſtory is continued on without the leaſt Intimation of what goes before being a Fable, without any Breach in the Connection, or any Change in the Language but what the Subject required. Where then, We muſt aſk thoſe who maintain the Beginning of the *Moſaic* Books to be a Fiction, does the Fiction end, and Truth take Place? For they are wrought up together with ſuch Care, and inſerted into each other in ſo nice a Manner, that an ordinary Eye can-

cannot diſtinguiſh between them. The Hiſtories of the remoteſt Ages, amongſt the Greek and Roman Nations, are but very imperfectly known. In the Accounts they give of them, there is apparently a great Mixture of Fiction; but then they do not pretend to Certainty in them, and the moſt ingenuous of their Writers always ſpeak of them with Diffidence. They have their Fabulous Ages, and diſtinguiſh them from their Ages of true Hiſtory. But this is not the Caſe with *Moſes*. He does not demand for himſelf the *Venia Antiquitati*, but ſpeaks with as much Confidence, and as clear of all Reſerve, in the Beginning, as in the End of his Hiſtory. He aſſerts as poſitively that *Adam* was, by his Creator, placed in Paradiſe, and baniſhed out of it, as that the Children of *Iſrael* came into *Egypt*, and, after a long Reſidence there, were led out of it under his Conduct. Whence then could this Confidence ariſe, but from a Conſciouſneſs that all he reported was Truth? And could this Conſciouſneſs be acquired, except he had derived his Knowledge of the Beginning of the World from the Fountain of all Truth? The Greek and Latin Hiſtorians, when they are to trace up their Hiſtory into the obſcurer Periods of it, tread with great Circumſpection. If any one ſhould depart from this Method, and, while He was writing a ſerious Hiſtory of the Roman Affairs, ſhould aſſert with as little Heſitation, that *Romulus* was the Son of *Mars*, as that *Auguſtus* was the Succeſſour of *Julius Cæſar*, we ſhould certain-

certainly have his Authority, as far as it would go, for believing equally both theſe Points. Now *Moſes* ſpeaks as diſtinctly and as confidently of *Adam*, as of any Perſon that lived the neareſt to his own Times. Why then ſhould we believe his Account of *Adam* to be a Fiction, and the reſt to be true? He tells us the Time of his Living, and the Length of his Life, and aſcribes ſome very important Actions to him. He then proceeds to give an Account of his Sons, of the Length of their Lives and the moſt memorable Events in them. And thus he carries on the Thread of his Hiſtory regularly, and continues it down, without Interruption, to his own Times. The Account is intire, without the leaſt Flaw or Breach. The Chain of Chronology is particularly preſerved to us in the Lives of the Perſons he writes of. The ſame Air of Seriouſneſs and Truth runs through the whole, the Facts of one Age are not more doubtfully ſpoken of than of another, nor is there any more Obſcurity thrown upon one Part of the Hiſtory than upon another. Have we not then his Authority as ſtrong for believing what He records of one Age as of another? Why ſhall the Story, from which the Hiſtory takes its Riſe, be treated as a Fiction, when that which ſprings from it is held to be real? And why do we longer believe, upon the Authority of *Moſes*, what he tells us of the Poſterity of *Adam*, when we reſolve all that he relates of *Adam* himſelf into Imagination? Where the Account is purſued ſo regularly, and with

ſuch apparent Veracity and equal Pretenſions to Knowledge and Certainty, through all Ages, If we once begin to believe, I ſee not how we can ſtop the Progreſs of our Belief till we are arrived at the very Beginning; for the ſame Authority, that we ſet out upon, will bear us, without failing, through every Period of the Hiſtory. If we believe that *Jacob* was the Son of *Iſaac*, and *Iſaac* of *Abraham*, we muſt alſo believe on through the whole Race, from *Abraham* to *Noah*, to *Seth*, to *Adam*. If we give our Aſſent to what is told of the former, we cannot withhold it from what is related of the latter. Every ſucceeding Generation gives Credit to that which goes before it, nor can We, conſiſtently, hold the moſt antient to be fabulous, and the lateſt to be true. For 'tis certainly as abſurd to derive a Series of true Hiſtory from a Fiction, as a Series of true Prophecies.

And indeed the Account of this very Author, however ſtudiouſly he endeavours to avoid it, may be made to confeſs that there is ſome Degree of Truth in this Relation of *Moſes*. *All the Leſſon*, he ſays, *that can be inferred from the eaſtern Fable is this, that this World was created by God; and that Man was happy in it as long as he continued innocent, but forfeited his Happineſs, and became wretched and miſerable, as ſoon as he became a wilful (and habitual) Sinner*. Now all theſe very Facts, if we only leave out the Expreſſion *habitual*, which I have before conſidered, and ſhewn not to be fairly inferred, are taught, in the

the moſt plain and expreſs Manner, in the Hiſtory of the Creation and Fall. *In the Beginning God created the Heaven and the Earth.* [a] *So God created Man in his own Image, in the Image of God created he him: Male and Female created he them.* [b] *But of the Tree of the Knowledge of Good and Evil, thou ſhalt not eat of it: For in the Day that Thou eateſt thereof thou ſhalt ſurely die.* [c] *And when the Woman ſaw that the Tree was good for Food, and that it was pleaſant to the Eyes, and a Tree to be deſired to make one wiſe; She took of the Fruit thereof, and did eat, and gave alſo unto her Huſband with her; and He did eat.* [d] *Unto the Woman he ſaid, I will greatly multiply thy Sorrow, and thy Conception; In Sorrow thou ſhalt bring forth Children: And thy Deſire ſhall be to thy Huſband, and he ſhall rule over thee. And unto Adam he ſaid, Becauſe thou haſt hearkened unto the Voice of thy Wife, and haſt eaten of the Tree of which I commanded Thee ſaying, Thou ſhalt not eat of it, curſed is the Ground for thy Sake: In Sorrow ſhalt thou eat of it all the Days of thy Life. Thorns alſo and Thiſtles ſhall it bring forth to Thee: And Thou ſhalt eat the Herb of the Field. In the Sweat of thy Face ſhalt thou eat Bread, till thou return unto the Ground: For out of it waſt thou taken: For Duſt thou art and unto Duſt ſhalt thou return.* [e] Here it is ſaid that God created the Earth, and made Man in his own Image: that He created Man, Male and Female: that He foretold

a Gen. 1. 1. b Verſ. 27. c Chap. 2. 17. d Chap. 3. 6. e Verſ. 16, 17, 18, 19.

them that, whenever they ſhould venture to tranſgreſs his Command, Loſs of Happineſs would be the Conſequence: That the Woman, led aſide by her Paſſions, ſinned; She ſaw, deſired, and eat: The Man alſo, hearkening to her Voice before that of his Creator, fell with her: And laſtly, that, by Sinning, they incurred the divine Diſpleaſure, and were by God condemned to Labour, Sorrow and Death. All theſe Things are related in the plaineſt and ſimpleſt Language: They ſtand forth in the cleareſt Light, not lying hid under any Emblems, nor darkened with ſo much as one figurative Expreſſion. They are not in the leaſt diſcoloured, diſſembled, or diſguiſed. Every Thing wears its own proper Form. It is God himſelf who is the Creator of all Things, and Avenger of his violated Laws: It is Man himſelf who is happy in Innocence, and made miſerable by Diſobedience. It is the Paſſions themſelves that betray him into Sin: Sin itſelf which is the Cauſe of his Miſery; and Death itſelf which is threatned, and, with other attendant Sufferings, inflicted. Every ſingle Article therefore in the Leſſon, which Dr. *M.* has *inferred* from this Account, The Creation of the World by God, Man's Happineſs in it as long as he continued innocent, and his Miſery as ſoon as he became a wilful Sinner, are ſet forth here in Terms ſo plain and free from Ambiguity, that no Comment, no Language can make them appear plainer. When, that Part of the Account, which relates theſe Things, being confeſſedly literal,

reral, muſt be either literally true, or literally falſe. For Every Thing ſtands under its own Name and Character, is anſwerable for itſelf and Nothing elſe. There is no borrowed Form, Shadow, or Emblem, except Things may be called their own Shadows and Emblems.

Dr. *M.* finds great Fault with his Lordſhip for ſaying, in different Parts of his Diſcourſes, that the Account itſelf is Hiſtorical, but cloathed in Parables and Similitudes, and in ſome Part metaphorical. Now all this does not ſhew any Inconſiſtency in that excellent Writer. He is all along clear for the Facts related by *Moſes* being all literally true. In his late Appendix, he declares it as his Opinion, that a real Serpent was concerned in the Temptation. Yet he thinks that *this real Serpent might alſo ſtand as a proper Emblem of the Deceiver.* [a] We ſee there how the Account may be hiſtorically true, and yet cloathed in Parables and Similitudes. And for the remaining Part, its being alſo metaphorical, in that there is no Difficulty. For whoever has read this excellent Appendix, may learn that Metaphors do not belong to the ſubject Matter of any Narration, but to the Expreſſion or Language only. They may therefore indifferently be applied in any Writing, whether it be Truth or Fiction, and have accordingly been always uſed promiſcuouſly by all Kinds of Writers. But now we hear this ſharp Examiner declaring, that the Facts in this Account *are all apparently fictitious*,

a Diſc. pag. 57.

and

and impoſſible to be performed in the Manner in which they are deſcribed. [a] Yet it appears, from what has been ſaid, that he plainly admits the Truth of certain of the principal Facts contained in it, and confeſſes that ſome Part of it is truly hiſtorical. Theſe Poſitions cannot poſſibly be reconciled to Truth or Reaſon. His own Wit may be turned upon him, barely by inverting the Sentence; for it will be true of him, that he holds this Account to be wholly fictitious, to be made up of Parables and Similitudes, and yet to be, in ſome Part, Hiſtorical.

SINCE then the Truth of theſe Capital Facts cannot poſſibly be controverted, and they appear undeniably to be related in plain and common Language, If any one will ſtill maintain that the Author's Deſign was to inculcate the Belief of theſe Facts in an allegorical Manner, He muſt hold it to be a very ſtrange and ſingular Kind of Compoſition. It muſt be wholly a double Account, in which the ſame Things are literally and emblematically ſet forth, ſometimes clearly ſpoken of, ſometimes but obliquely pointed at, now fully diſcovered, and again partly concealed, at one Time held up to our View in their own proper and naked Forms, and then at laſt preſented to Us under a Diſguiſe. But, what is ſtill worſe, the Subſtance of the Diſcourſe muſt all be made true, and the allegorical Repreſentation of that Subſtance thrown into the Circumſtances. Thus the Sin, and conſequent Miſery

a Page 124.

of

of *Adam*, are literally told, and literally admitted. If therefore they be alſo emblematically told, the Emblem can lie no where, but in ſome of thoſe Circumſtances, which are ſaid to have accompanied his Fall. Thus the Circumſtances muſt become the Emblems of the Facts which they attend, and be made to give a reflected Image of them. But to what Purpoſe? When we have been ſhewn a Thing fairly, in its genuine Form, the Author muſt have great Leiſure if he ſtays to entertain us with it alſo in a Maſk. For it can ſerve no Purpoſe but our Entertainment, ſince all the Uſes, either for Knowledge or Practice, may more eaſily be drawn from the Reality than from any Image of it. All the material Facts deſigned to be inculcated being then confeſſedly true, and undeniably literal, no further good End to be anſwered, no parallel Authorities from any reputable Author whatſoever, can be brought to encourage or countenance Us in making the Circumſtances, which only remain to be queſtioned, Allegorical. On the contrary it is repugnant to the Practice of all Writers, and to the Genius of all People and Languages, and utterly irreconcileable to all regular Thinking or Conſiſtency of Deſign. The Circumſtances cannot then be allegorical, but they muſt alſo be reputed either literally true, or literally falſe. If they be falſe, then muſt it be confeſſed that the Author has debaſed his Truth by this Mixture of Alloy, and they can deſerve no better Name, than the Embelliſhments of a vain

vain and ſportive Fancy ſet at Work to diſguiſe Truths of ever uſeful Importance.

THE Circumſtances, when we mark their Connection with the fundamental Points, receive a communicated Force, which muſt neceſſarily draw them after theſe either into the Regions of Truth or Fiction. But we will venture to conſider them alſo independently of theſe principal and allowed Facts, and, diveſting them of this outward Impulſe, to obſerve their own natural Tendency. And even thus we muſt ſtill acknowledge their Propenſity to the Side of Truth. They bear ſuch ſtrong Characters and Impreſſions of it as viſibly demonſtrates their inward Dignity and Alliance to it. The Author in them all along accounts for the Origin and Nature of many Things, as they ſtill exiſt, and as they are afterwards deſcribed in the Sequel of his Hiſtory. Now this he would certainly never have done, if he had not deſigned that this his Manner of accounting for them ſhould be received for Truth. For if they be intended to be held as Fictions, they are ſuch Fictions as never had place in any ſerious and reputable Hiſtory, ſuch as the Remainder of the Pentateuch, I hope, will ſtill be allowed. *Moſes* deſcribes the Origin of the Sabbath in theſe Words. *And God bleſſed the Seventh Day, and ſanctified it: becauſe that in it he had reſted from all his Work, which God created and made.*[a] We know very well that the Jews ſtill keep this Sabbath, and for the Reaſon

[a] Gen. 2. 3.

here

here aſſigned: And *Moſes* himſelf in the Courſe of his Hiſtory often mentions their religious Obſervance of it. Thus *Livy* deſcribes the Original of the *Ludi Capitolini*, which he ſays were inſtituted in Memory of a very remarkable Preſervation of the Capitol from the *Gauls*.[a] Would not his contemporary *Romans*, to whom the Cuſtom was well known, have had a very mean Opinion of their Hiſtorian, if he had laid the Foundation of theſe their Solemnities in a Fable? When again He aſcribes the Building of the Temple to *Jupiter Feretrius* and the dedicating of the firſt *opima Spolia* therein to *Romulus*, on his conquering and killing with his own Hand *Acron* King of the *Cæninenſes*,[b] and afterwards tells us that *Corn. Coſſus*, in Imitation of *Romulus*, dedicated them on the like Occaſion, and fixed them in the ſame Temple,[c] would not that Commentator be thought to charge his Author with an Inconſiſtency, who ſhould allow the latter Account to be true, but ſhould ſay that the former was a Fiction of his own? Shall we then charge *Moſes* with this or with ſtill greater Inconſiſtences? He not only barely mentions the future Obſervance of the Sabbath, but commands it: He is zealous for its being kept in the ſtricteſt Manner, and exerts himſelf in puniſhing thoſe who profaned it. Can we imagine the People would have ſubmitted to this inſtitution, with that religious Reverence of it which many of them actually

a Hiſt. L. 5. C. 50. Ludi Capitolini fierent &c. b Lib. 1. 10. c Lib. 4. 20.

had, if they had known, or but ſuſpected, that the Grounds and Reaſons, upon which they were commanded to obſerve it, were all an Invention of their Lawgiver? Or can we think ſo baſely of *Moſes* himſelf as to believe that he could, with ſuch Rigour and Shew of Sanctity, have inforced the Obſervance of it upon Motives which he was conſcious to himſelf deſerved no Regard? But more may ſtill be ſaid for the Truth of this particular Circumſtance. For God himſelf afterwards commands the Keeping of the Sabbath upon the very ſame Reaſons on which *Moſes* had before eſtabliſhed it, as may be ſeen in the Fourth Commandment. He alſo wrought a Miracle expreſsly to encourage and promote the Obſervance of it; For he ſent a double Portion of Manna on the ſixth Day, that the People might be enabled to reſt on the Seventh.[a] We cannot account for this divine Concurrence in Support of this Inſtitution, if we hold that the Foundation of it was a Fiction. For the Performance of religious Services from erroneous Motives is often as diſagreeable to God as even the Neglect of them. It cannot be, that he ſhould lay the Foundation of his Service, or ſupport it when laid, upon ſuch Motives.

THIS Mark of Truth, which is found beſides in many more of the Circumſtances, is likewiſe common to the fundamental Articles of this Narration. As may be ſeen in the following ſummary View of the moſt material of them. The

[a] Exod. 16.

Ex-

Exiſtence of the Earth in its preſent State, with all the Claſſes of the vegetable and Brute Creation, are accounted for in the Firſt Chapter. The Origin of Man is related in theſe Words: *And the Lord God formed Man of the Duſt of the Ground, and breathed into his Noſtrils the Breath of Life; and Man became a living Soul.* [a] Of the Woman, in the ſame Chapter: *But for* Adam *there was not found an Help meet for him. And the Lord God cauſed a deep Sleep to fall upon* Adam, *and he ſlept: And he took one of his Ribs, and cloſed up the Fleſh inſtead thereof. And the Rib, which the Lord God had taken from Man, made he a Woman, and brought her unto the Man.* [b] Here is alſo laid the Foundation of the reciprocal Duty and Affection that ought to ſubſiſt between Man and Wife: as it is deduced in the following Verſes. *And* Adam *ſaid, This is now Bone of my Bone, and Fleſh of my Fleſh: She ſhall be called Woman, becauſe She was taken out of Man. Therefore ſhall a Man leave his Father and Mother, and ſhall cleave unto his Wife: And they ſhall be one Fleſh.* [c] The Introduction of Sin into the World is deſcribed in the Beginning of the next Chapter. For our Parents are tempted to tranſgreſs a Command of God, and to eat of a Fruit which he had commanded them to abſtain from. [d] I have our Author's Word that *the abject State of the Serpentine Race* [e] is accounted for, and *the Cauſe and Origin of their preſent odious Nature ex-*

a Chap. 2. Verſ. 7. b Verſ. 20, 21, 22. c Verſ. 23, 24.
d Chap. 3. to Verſ. 7. e Page 134.

plained in 14, 15 Verſ. *And the Lord God ſaid unto the Serpent, Becauſe thou haſt done this, thou art curſed above all Cattle, and above every Beaſt of the Field: upon thy Belly ſhalt thou go, and Duſt ſhalt thou eat all the Days of thy Life. And I will put Enmity between Thee and the Woman, and between thy Seed and her Seed: It ſhall bruiſe thy Head, and thou ſhalt bruiſe his Heel.* But to call it a *fanciful Solution*, as that Author does, in which View it can neither be of Uſe to Morality nor Hiſtory, is to make *Moſes* ſo injudicious and trifling a Writer, as muſt ſink his Genius and Deſign below thoſe of the worſt Fabuliſts or Compoſers of Metamorphoſes. In the next Verſe the ſingular Pains, that are laid upon Women in Child-Bearing, are accounted for, and the Foundation of that Submiſſion they owe their Huſbands is laid. *Unto the Woman He ſaid, I will greatly multiply thy Sorrow, and thy Conception; In Sorrow thou ſhalt bring forth Children: And thy Deſire ſhall be to thy Huſband, and he ſhall rule over thee.* [a] The Unfruitfulneſs of the Ground, and the Neceſſity of Man's great Labour in the Cultivation of it are accounted for in the following Words. *And unto* Adam *he ſaid, Becauſe Thou haſt hearkened unto the Voice of thy Wife, and haſt eaten of the Tree, of which I commanded Thee, ſaying, Thou ſhalt not eat of it: Curſed is the Ground for thy Sake; In Sorrow ſhalt thou eat of it all the Days of thy Life. Thorns alſo and Thiſtles ſhall it bring forth to Thee: And Thou ſhalt*

a Verſ. 16.

eat

eat the Herb of the Field. [a] Then follows an Account of the Frailty and Mortality of our Race. *In the Sweat of thy Face ſhalt thou eat Bread, till thou return unto the Ground; For out of it waſt thou taken: For Duſt Thou art, and unto Duſt ſhalt thou return.* [b] I carry this View no farther becauſe hitherto only has the Truth of the *Moſaic* Writings been at preſent called in Queſtion.

THESE are the Things whoſe Natures and preſent Manner of Exiſtence *Moſes* has accounted for in this his Relation of the Creation and Fall. We are Witneſſes that the Things do yet exiſt, and therefore they muſt have been brought into this State of Exiſtence by ſome Means or other. Whether *Moſes*'s Manner of accounting for them is the true one or not, muſt depend intirely on his Veracity. Since he has accounted for them, and ſince his Deſcription of their Origin has a ſtrong and inſeparable Connection with a Series of true Hiſtory, I think We cannot behold ſuch an Attempt in any other Light than as hiſtorical. His Writings are manifeſtly a Relation of ſome of the principal Revolutions both in the moral and natural World from the Beginning to his own Time. He writes the Hiſtory of fallen Man, and he writes the Hiſtory of Man's Fall. If we can prove, that he has aſcribed any one of theſe Revolutions to wrong Cauſes, or that, in any one Period, he has copied only from his Imagination, what is this but overthrowing his Veracity? Fabuliſts may convey their Moral in

a Verſ. 17, 18. b Verſ. 19.

feigned,

feigned, but probable, Stories, making their Actors and Characters ſtill conſiſtent with the Nature of Things, which is the Caſe of Allegory: Or they may form a new Creation of their own, and then the Production will be an Apologue: But, when a profeſſed Hiſtorian takes in Hand to account for the preſent Nature of Things, and to deliver the Cauſes of their exiſting in the Manner we now ſee them exiſt, to do this in a Way different from the Truth can proceed from Nothing but Ignorance, or a Deſire to miſlead; and the Author of ſuch a Work, is not to be called an Allegoriſt, but a Deceiver.

If, to theſe Arguments for a Belief that the Story of the Creation and Fall was intended for an Account of real Facts, we add the ſacred Teſtimony of ſome Paſſages of later Scriptures concurring to induce the ſame Belief, I hope no more need be added.

Wherever it is referr'd to in the ſubſequent Writings, both of the Old and New Teſtament, it is conſtantly done as to a Relation literally true, and literally underſtood. As one powerful Inſtance of this Kind we may again return to the Fourth Commandment, and thoſe other Paſſages which eſtabliſh or inforce the Obſervation of the Sabbath. For they not only reſt the Obligation to this religious Service upon the *Moſaical* Account of the Creation, and therefore neceſſarily ſuppoſe its Truth: but alſo further, in expreſs Terms aſſert it. Thus the Fourth Commandment affirms that *in Six Days the Lord made Heaven*

Heaven and Earth, the Sea, and all that in them is, and reſted the Seventh Day: wherefore the Lord bleſſed the Sabbath Day, and hallowed it. [a] Again: *Wherefore the children of* Iſrael *ſhall keep the Sabbath, to obſerve the Sabbath throughout their Generations, for a perpetual Covenant. It is a Sign between Me and the Children of* Iſrael *for ever: For in Six Days the Lord made Heaven and Earth, and on the Seventh Day he reſted, and was refreſhed.* [b] Here may not improperly be added, what the Author of the Epiſtle to the *Hebrews* ſays, *For He ſpake in a certain Place of the Seventh Day on this wiſe, and God did reſt the Seventh Day from all his Works.* [c] If then the *Moſaic* Account of the Creation be fictitious, the Foundation on which this Duty is laid is imaginary, and the Obligation grounded thereon ceaſes. The Creation of the Firſt Man and Woman, with the Order and Manner of their Creation and Tranſgreſſion, are Points whoſe Validity is ſupported in the following Paſſages. *For a Man ought not to cover his Head, for as much as he is the Image and Glory of God; but the Woman is the Glory of the Man. For the Man is not of the Woman: but the Woman of the Man.* [d] *The Firſt Man is of the Earth, Earthy.* [e] *For* Adam *was firſt formed, then* Eve. *And* Adam *was not deceived, but the Woman being deceived was in the Tranſgreſſion.* [f] *But I fear leſt by any Means as the Serpent beguiled* Eve *through his Subtilty, ſo your*

a Exod. 20. 11. b Exod 31. 16, 17. c Hebr. 4. 4. d 1 Cor. 11. 7, 8. e 1 Cor. 15. 47. f 1 Tim. 2. 14.

Minds

Minds ſhould be corrupted from the Simplicity that is in Chriſt. [a]

AGAIN. We may behold our Saviour himſelf eſtabliſhing and ſecuring the Practice of a moral Duty upon the Credit of this ſame Relation: And making it the Rule and Standard of that Affection which ought to ſubſiſt between Man and Wife. *The* Phariſees *alſo came unto him tempting him, and ſaying unto him, is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife for every Cauſe? And He anſwered and ſaid unto them, Have ye not read, that He which made them at the Beginning made them Male and Female? and ſaid, for this Cauſe ſhall a Man leave Father and Mother, and ſhall cleave to his Wife: And they twain ſhall be one Fleſh. Wherefore they are no more twain but one Fleſh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not Man put aſunder.* [b] It cannot be thought tedious to run over the ſame Diſcourſe in the Words of another Evangeliſt. *And the* Phariſees *came to him and aſked him, is it lawful for a Man to put away his Wife? tempting him. And he anſwered and ſaid unto them, what did* Moſes *command You? And they ſaid,* Moſes *ſuffered to write a Bill of Divorcement, and to put her away. And Jeſus anſwered and ſaid unto them, For the Hardneſs of your Heart he wrote You this Precept. But From the Beginning of the Creation, God made them Male and Female. For this Cauſe ſhall a Man leave his Father and Mother, and cleave to his Wife; and they twain ſhall be one Fleſh: ſo then they are*

a 2 Cor. 11. 3. b Matth. 19. 3 &c.

no

no more twain, but one Fleſh. What therefore God hath joined together, let not Man put aſunder. [a] We ſee how readily and clearly our Saviour ſolves this controverted Point on the Authority of this Account of *Moſes*. For ſince this was the firſt human Relation that ever ſubſiſted, and ſince it was cemented in the cloſeſt Manner imaginable, and by the Hand of God himſelf, it ought to be preſerved the laſt, and maintained in Preference to all other interfering Relations. From the Beginning of the Creation, God made them Male and Female. For this Cauſe, that it was the firſt Relation, ſhall a Man leave his Father and Mother, poſtponing thoſe Relations which are of a later Commencement, and cleave unto his Wife, and they twain ſhall be one Fleſh. What therefore God hath joined together let not Man put aſunder. Let no human Authority preſume to reſcind thoſe Ties which God himſelf hath connected. But had Dr. *M.* been of Council for the *Phariſees*, how ſoon would he have obviated our Saviour's Argument! "The Principles, ſays "He, you argue from are imaginary: They were "not joined together by God's creating Hand, but "by the Invention of *Moſes*."

I ſhall produce yet one Claſs more of Scrip-Quotations in Support of the Authority of this Hiſtory. *Nevertheleſs Death reigned from* Adam *to* Moſes, *even over them that had not ſinned after the Similitude of* Adam's *Tranſgreſſion, who is the Figure of him that was to come. But not as the Of-*

a Mark 10. 2 &c.

fence, ſo alſo is the Free Gift. For if through the Offence of one, many be dead; much more the Grace of God, and the Gift by Grace, which is by one Man, Jeſus Chriſt, hath abounded unto many. And not as it was by one that ſinned, ſo is the Gift: For the Judgment was by one to Condemnation; but the Free Gift is of many Offences unto Juſtification. For if by one Man's Offence Death reigned by one, much more they which receive Abundance of Grace, and of the Gift of Righteouſneſs, ſhall reign in Life by one Jeſus Chriſt. Therefore as by the Offence of one, Judgment came upon all Men to Condemnation: Even ſo by the Righteouſneſs of one, the Free Gift came upon all Men unto Juſtification of Life. For as by one Mans Diſobedience many were made Sinners: So by the Obedience of one, ſhall many be made righteous. [a] Again. *But now is Chriſt riſen from the dead and become the Firſt-Fruits of them that ſlept. For ſince by Man came Death, by Man came alſo the Reſurrection of the dead. For as in* Adam *all die, even ſo in Chriſt ſhall all be made alive.* [b] Here is a large Compariſon made between the Loſs and Hurt Mankind ſuſtained by the Fall of *Adam*, and the Benefits they received by the voluntary Sacrifice of Chriſt. That both theſe are viſionary I hope will not be aſſerted. Shall we then ſay that the Compariſon is made between a Truth and a Fiction? That cannot be. Becauſe it is ſaid that *as in* Adam *all die, even ſo*, in the ſame Manner, and no otherwiſe, *ſhall all be made alive by Chriſt.* If therefore it be

a Rom. 5. 14 &c. b 1 Cor. 15, 20, 21, 22.

only

only a Fable which makes *Adam* the Cauſe of our Death, in the ſame Manner muſt it be a Fable that Chriſt ſhall be the Author of our Life. Or if we have full Aſſurance of the Reality of our expected living in Chriſt, then we muſt alſo admit the Reality of our pretended dying in *Adam*. For we may reaſon *è Converſo* that *as in Chriſt all ſhall be made alive, even ſo in* Adam *did all die*. The aſſign'd Cauſe of the Damage, and Reparation, of our Nature, are ſpoken of with the ſame Degree of Certainty: And therefore the Accounts we have of the Author and Production of our promiſed Happineſs, and our experienced Miſery, (both which the Apoſtle ſuppoſes Us to be acquainted with) muſt demand an equal Degree of Credit. For the Apoſtles Argument will not allow Us to hold the one for a Fiction, and the other for a Truth. As then we value the Foundation of the glorious Hopes of a Reſurrection and an Immortality, let us not deſtroy the Foundation on which the ſuppoſed Depravation of our Nature is maintained. For We ſhall all be made alive in Chriſt no otherwiſe than as We all died in *Adam*.

Upon the Whole. There is Nothing incredible in the Facts or Matter of this Relation, and therefore it is no Apologue.

The Authority of the Writer is unqueſtioned, and is great enough to eſtabliſh a Belief of any credible Facts: The Deſign of the Author, which was the Inſtruction of the World in ſeveral moral and religious Duties, and in the Truth of ſe-

veral Facts from whence thoſe Duties are derived, could not have been anſwered by a Fable: Through the whole of the Account are interſperſed ſeveral evident Characteriſtics of true Hiſtory: And laſtly, for its being a true Hiſtory there are the Suffrages of many ſacred Interpreters, inſpired by the ſame Holy Spirit which preſided in its Compoſition: And Therefore it is no Fable.

WHENCE we arrive at the laſt Concluſion, for the ſake of which chiefly the whole Argument was undertaken, that the Foundation of the Firſt Prophecy is yet ſecure: And therefore, notwithſtanding any Thing here objected, that it may ſtill be eſteemed a Part of that Chain of Prophecies extended through all Antiquity, in which the Revelation of the promiſed Redeemer was gradually unfolded.

I have all along avoided giving any Explanation of my own of the ſeveral Particulars of this Hiſtory which have come under Conſideration, both becauſe ſeveral good and convenient Explanations of the whole have been already given, by many eminent Authors, and alſo becauſe my preſent Deſign did not carry me any further, than barely to free it from the Objections that had been revived againſt it. My Attempt was not to procure any new Light, but to reſtore the old: and to recover that which, by the Interpoſition of an envious Cloud, had been intercepted.

III. A brief State of the Queſtion, whether Prophecies or Miracles afford ſtronger Evidence for the Truth of Chriſtianity.

WHY is this made a Queſtion by the Enemies of Chriſtianity? They who will not allow that it is ſupported by any Strength of Evidence at all, why do they go about to compare the Strength of two diſtinct Kinds of it's Evidence, and, denying that there are any Proofs for its Truth, why do they diſpute by what Means its Truth may be moſt effectually proved? Or why, again, is it debated amongſt the Friends of Chriſtianity? If they are ſatisfied in the whole of its Evidence, and feel that its united Force is ſtrong enough to overthrow all Oppoſition, and to work a full Conviction in every unprejudiced Mind, this is all that the Service of Chriſtianity demands; and it can be but an unprofitable Curioſity at beſt that can engage them to ſpend their Leiſure in enquiring into the ſeparate and diſtinct Forces of its ſeveral Parts. If ſeveral Witneſſes had given in their Evidence in ſome depending Cauſe, and the Jury were of Opinion that

that their concurring Teſtimony decided the Matter ſo clearly as to leave no Room for further Doubts; for them to ſuſpend their Sentence till they had made a nice Diſquiſition into the diſtinct Weight of every ſingle Depoſition, would be thought, at leaſt, a ſuperfluous Exactneſs, and a Delay which the Service of the Cauſe did not demand.

'Tis probable therefore, that this Queſtion owes its Riſe to a Set of Men not properly taken in under either of theſe Claſſes. I mean thoſe Enemies of the Chriſtian Cauſe, who wear the Maſk of Friends. Unable to gain their Ends by open Force, they craftily endeavour to divide it againſt itſelf, and thus to deſtroy it by its own Strength. They endeavour to ſhew that Prophecy is a ſtronger Proof of the Truth of Chriſtianity than Miracles. One would at firſt apprehend no ill Deſign here. For what would be the Conſequence? Miracles afford a very ſtrong Proof: Prophecy yields yet a ſtronger: Therefore Chriſtianity is impregnable. This would be the Inference of a common Genius. But theſe ſublime Reaſoners would give the Argument a contrary Tendency, making this ſurprizing Inference, therefore Chriſtianity is overthrown: And having with great Induſtry proved the Strength of Prophecy ſuperior to that of Miracles, would terminate their Reaſoning here, that there is not the leaſt Degree of Strength in either of them.

They, to whom the Laws of Argument are known, will eaſily diſcern the Weakneſs of this

this Sophiſm. Indeed they conceal their firſt Term; but force them to produce this, and the Fallacy appears. They begin by ſaying that Prophecy is ſtronger than Miracles. But it is plain that, before any Compariſon can be begun between them, or any Judgment made of the Exceſs of the Force of one above that of the other, the Amount of their particular Forces ſhould firſt be known. Or, if this Diſquiſition be too nice or laborious, it muſt at leaſt be agreed upon that they have each of them ſome Quantity of Force, and that Force muſt be valued in the Groſs; otherwiſe no Eſtimate can be made, though ever ſo inartificial, of their comparative Forces. The diſtinct Forces then of Prophecy and Miracles, or at leaſt of one of them, is evidently the firſt Term, though they endeavour to hide it. Whence it is plain, that, by returning after the Compariſon to weaken the Forces of either of them, they are chargeable with an Abſurdity even worſe than that of *Begging the Queſtion:* their Reaſoning maanifeſtly terminates in an Attempt to unſettle that which was firſt of all ſettled; to eſtabliſh an Eſtimate of the Two Forces contrary to that which was firſt agreed upon; and therefore to deſtroy thoſe very Principles from which the Argument proceeded.

It muſt ſurely be plain to common Senſe, that a Compariſon between Two Things does not affect or alter the real Nature of the Things themſelves. The Reſult of it can only be a Knowledge of the Proportion they bear to each other,

of

of their relative Value, not of that which ought to be known before, their real Worth conſidered ſingly and independently on each other. For the Things compared remain the ſame in every Reſpect after, as they were before, the Compariſon. However they go on, to the great Surprize of all the Beholders, to convince them that this Bulwark of Prophecy, which they had laboured to raiſe to ſuch ſeeming Strength and Fairneſs, is all a Deception of the Senſes, and therefore by cauſing this to vaniſh, which was to Appearance the ſtrongeſt, they imagine all the other pretended Strength of Evidence muſt ſink and diſappear with it. Thus they would raiſe one Part of the Edifice above its natural Height, and then, by letting it fall upon the reſt, cruſh the whole Structure under it. Such treacherous Deſigns lurk underneath ſuch ſpecious Appearances! Like the faithleſs *Delilah*, with a ſeemingly affectionate Anxiety, they enquire where the great Strength of Chriſtianity lieth, that they may at once lop it off, and deliver it over, thus deſpoiled and enfeebled, to the Deriſion and Inſults of its Enemies. But they are deceived. A Conqueſt over Chriſtianity is not to be acquired by any ſuch Artifices as theſe. Its Strength is not, like that of the *Hebrew* Champion, lodged in any Excreſcencies, or held by Virtue of any ſecret Cuſtoms or Obſervances: but is natural to it, runs through its Conſtitution, and is diffuſed in juſt Proportions over all its Parts.

IT has been pretended that our Saviour himſelf has entered into this Diſpute, and has decided it in the Manner they deſire, who wiſh to make the worſt Uſe of it againſt his Religion. Though I really think that this Queſtion howſoever decided, if fairly conſidered, threatens no great Hurt, or promiſes no great Advantage, to Chriſtianity; yet, becauſe deſigning Men may give it ſuch a Turn as to miſlead the unwary, and make that an Inſtrument of the greateſt Hurt which is in itſelf perfectly harmleſs; to prevent this Abuſe of the Nature of Things, and to deprive the Enemies of Chriſtianity of their laſt faint Hopes of Succeſs in their fraudulent Attempts againſt it, is a Proſpect which makes this Queſtion ſeem more worthy a ſerious Conſideration, and the Endeavour to ſet it in a clear Light appear fruitful of better Effects, than barely the Gratification of an indolent Curioſity. We ſhall begin then by conſidering the Aſſertion of Dr. *Middleton, that all which his Lordſhip has been affirming ſo freely concerning the ſuperior Evidence of Miracles to that of Prophecy, ſeems to have been originally confuted, and the whole Queſtion determined againſt him by Chriſt himſelf; Who in one of his Parables declares, that thoſe, who would not hearken to* Moſes *and the Prophets, would not be perſuaded, though one roſe from the dead.* Luke 16. 31. *clearly intimating, that the Word of Prophecy, as delivered in the Old Teſtament, carried with it a firmer Proof of the Truth of his Goſpel to the Jews, than even the greateſt of all Miracles.*[a] It is

[a] P. 57.

proper to begin with this, becauſe if our Saviour's Sentiments ſhould really appear to be what they are here repreſented, all Argument is at an End: And Nothing will remain for Us to do, but, ſubmitting to his ſacred Authority, to guard againſt any ill Application of his Opinion, and to prevent his own Declaration from being turned to the Deſtruction of his Cauſe.

Two Circumſtances well underſtood, will lead Us to a clear Apprehenſion of the Force of this Paſſage as far as the preſent Queſtion is concerned, *viz.* what was the Point, and what were the Means, of Perſwaſion propoſed. Dr. *M.* thinks that the Point of Perſwaſion was the Truth of the Goſpel, and the Means, expreſſed by *Moſes and the Prophets*, and *the Riſing of one from the dead*, Prophecies and Miracles. Now granting that he is right in this Opinion, ſtill our Saviour's declaring that the latter would be ineffectual where the former had failed, will be far from amounting to *a clear Intimation, that the Word of Prophecy carried with it a firmer Proof of the Truth of the Goſpel, than the greateſt of all Miracles:* becauſe he does not ſay that Prophecy could do more than Miracles, but only that Miracles could not do more than Prophecy; not, that Prophecy could bring Conviction to the Mind of an Infidel where Miracles had failed, but that the latter could not overcome that Degree of Infidelity which had been Proof againſt the former. The Inference then can be carried no farther than that Miracles are not of ſuperior Force

to

to Prophecy, which differs widely from a Declaration in Favour of the Superiority of Prophecy: For ſtill they may ſtand both upon a Level, and their Powers may remain equal. Allowing then that He has taken both theſe Points right, it appears that our Saviour has not decided the Queſtion as he would have it. But we are not yet ſure that He has not miſtaken the Deſign of the Parable. We find that it was ſpoken to the Phariſees, who it is ſaid were covetous. Accordingly a Rich Man is made the chief Character in the Parable. The Uſe he made of his Riches was not, to communicate to others, and to relieve the Wants of the diſtreſſed: For when *Lazarus* was laid at his Gate full of Sores, and deſiring to be fed with the Crumbs which fell from the Rich Man's Table, we do not read that He had any Relief except from the Dogs, which came and licked his Sores: But He applied them to the Indulgence of his Appetites, and ſpent them upon himſelf in all the Splendour and Luxury of Life. He was clothed in Purple and fine Linnen, and fared ſumptuouſly every Day. This is all that is related of his Life. We find him next in very different Circumſtances, in the Torments of Hell. For He died, and was buried, and in Hell he lift up his Eyes, being in Torments. Now what do we imagine our Saviour expected his Hearers ſhould underſtand to be the Cauſe of his Puniſhment? Surely thoſe Crimes alone which He had reported of his Life, amongſt which a Rejection of the Goſpel has no Place.

He now, in his Turn, becomes a Supplicant, and begs firſt for a Relief of his own Miſeries. But, when this is denied him, he petitions next for a Prevention of the Miſeries of his Relations. *Then He ſaid, I pray Thee, Father, that Thou wouldeſt ſend* Lazarus *to my Father's Houſe: For I have Five Brethren; that he may teſtify unto them, leſt they alſo come into this Place of Torment.* What was he deſirous that *Lazarus* ſhould teſtify to his Brethren? We can ſuppoſe it to be Nothing elſe than that which his own Caſe ſuggeſted and which *Lazarus* had been a Witneſs to, the Event of a luxurious and immoral Life, and the Miſeries which attended the wicked in a future State. He thought that this could not fail of deterring them from purſuing his Steps in Life, and thereby would prevent their coming into the ſame Place of Torment with himſelf. *Abraham* ſaid that an Attention to *Moſes* and the Prophets, which they were already poſſeſſed of, was ſufficient to effect what he deſired. *They have* Moſes *and the Prophets; let them hear them. And he ſaid, nay, Father* Abraham, *but if one went unto them from the dead, they will repent.* The ordinary Methods of Admonition, which they have been ſo long accuſtomed to diſregard, will make no Impreſſion upon their hardned Minds; but ſo aſtoniſhing a Call as this could not fail of ſtriking their Attention, and producing their Reformation. *And* Abraham *ſaid unto him, if they hear not* Moſes *and the Prophets, neither will they be perſwaded though one roſe from the dead.*

FROM this View of the Parable it does not ſeem in the leaſt probable, that the Truth of the Goſpel was what the Rich Man deſired to have his Friends perſwaded of. There is no Room to imagine that the Characters of this Parable are taken from ſuch as were ſuppoſed to have had the Goſpel preached unto them. And except they were ſuch, the Reception of the Goſpel cannot poſſibly be concerned in the Diſcourſe. A Diſbelief of its Truth was not amongſt the Sins for which the Rich Man himſelf ſuffered. Nor is there the leaſt Intimation that he wanted to have charged *Lazarus* with any other Commiſſion, than to teſtify unto them the Truths which aroſe from his own ſad Example. But what muſt entirely clear up the Matter is that he himſelf expreſsly tells us for what End he wanted to have ſent to his Brethren a Herald from the dead: not, to perſwade them to embrace the Goſpel, but to repent: *But if one went unto them from the dead, ſays He, they will repent.* It is clear then that the Point of Perſwaſion is not the Truth of the Goſpel, but the Neceſſity of Repentance and a virtuous Life in Order to future Happineſs. Whence it will follow as clearly, that the Means of Perſwaſion recommended by *Abraham* under the Name of *Moſes and the Prophets*, could not be thoſe Predictions of the Meſſiah which were contained in the Old Teſtament, becauſe theſe, of all the Parts of the Scriptures, could have the leaſt direct Tendency to bring about the deſired End. I hope we need not be reminded here that by

by a familiar Cuſtom of ſpeaking, *Moſes and the Prophets* was a Term ſignifying the whole Volume of the Jewiſh Scriptures. Whatever Rules of Life then were diſſeminated through theſe Scriptures, whatever inſtructive Precepts or Examples they contained, whatever Deſcriptions and Monuments were to be found in them of God's eternal Juſtice and Mercy, whatever they taught of his Hatred to Vice and Love of Virtue, whatever Motives and Encouragement they held up to Mankind to draw them to the practice of the latter, or whatever Denunciations of Vengeance they proclaimed to deter them from the former, theſe were the Parts in them peculiarly fitted to impreſs upon the Minds of Men a Senſe of their Duty, to reclaim them from their Errors, and to awe or allure them into the Study of Godlineſs: And therefore theſe muſt have been the Parts which *Abraham* is made to point out to the Regard of thoſe whom he wanted to bring back into the Paths of Life. And whoever is ſo hardned as not to be wrought upon by theſe powerful Arguments, whoever refuſes to hear the Voice of *Moſes* and the Prophets inſtructing him with the greateſt Clearneſs and Authority, and giving undoubted Proofs of their divine Commiſſion, ſuch an one, of ſo ſtubborn and inſenſible an Heart, would not be moved nor perſwaded though one roſe from the dead: For even a Meſſenger from the dead could not bring clearer Diſcoveries of the Will of God, nor ſtronger Credentials of his bearing the divine Authority, than had

had already been unſucceſsfully applied to them. It is not then the Prophecies, but the Doctrines ſupported by the Authority of the ſacred Writings, that are here ſpoken of as ſufficient to work a Reformation in any Mind yet open to Conviction. And therefore it is a Miſapplication of this Parable to produce it as an Argument of our Saviour's Opinion concerning the Efficacy of Prophecy and Miracles in atteſting the Truth of his Goſpel. And it is ſtill a greater Miſapplication of it to produce it as an Argument that his Opinion was in Favour of the ſuperior Efficacy of the former.

SINCE then it may be done without any Treſpaſs on the ſacred Authority of our Saviour, let us reaſon of the relative Powers of Prophecy and Miracles, and endeavour to ſet them in ſo clear a Light, that it may be eaſy for every one to compare them together, and to form a clear Notion of their mutual Proportions. The plaineſt and moſt natural Way to this is to gain a diſtinct Knowledge of the Things to be compared, their individual and independent Powers. By what Virtue is it then that Prophecy becomes a divine Evidence of the Miſſion of him for whoſe Sake it is given, and whence is its Power derived? The Solution of this Queſtion cannot be very difficult: It requires Nothing more than a little Attention to the Steps by which we are led to ſee the Evidence of Prophecy. When we ſee a Prophecy given out long before the Time of the Event which it foretells, or clearly foretelling a Contin-

Contingency, in either Caſe we readily diſcern that it cannot be the Reſult of human Wiſdom. For the Event, in the former Caſe, is too remote to be perceived by human Sight, and in the latter, lies concealed behind ſuch Obſtacles as no mortal Eye can pierce through. We cannot unthread thoſe intricate Avenues that lead to it in one Caſe, nor ſtretch over the immenſe Diſtance by which it is divided from Us in the other. When therefore we ſee ſuch an Event, which is plainly out of the Reach of human Diſcernment, as clearly deſcribed in the Prophecy of it, as if it had gone before the Deſcription, we perceive that it muſt come from that all-wiſe Being before whom alone all Things and Events are laid open and naked, whoſe Knowledge paſſes beyond all conceivable Bounds of Time or Space, and who ſees the whole Series of future Beings unfolded before they have Exiſtence. Here now grows the Teſtimony of a divine Miſſion in Behalf of him, for whoſe Sake the Prophecy is given. The Wiſdom of God undeniably witneſſeth his Truth, and proclaims the Juſtice of his Pretenſions. He brings a Ray of Light, which could be borrowed from no one elſe but from the Father of Lights. And therefore the Virtue of Prophecy lies here, that its Teſtimony is manifeſtly the Teſtimony of divine Knowledge.

Let Us now in like Manner endeavour to diſcover where the Virtue of Miracles lies. We behold an Effect produced, which is manifeſtly beyond the Power of thoſe ſenſible Means uſed in

in its Production, We muſt readily ſee that it cannot be the Work of any natural Cauſe, or of any human Agent. For no Efficacy of Nature can produce any other Effect than barely that which is adequate to the Power of thoſe Means or Cauſes it ſets to Work. Neither can any Art of Man add to natural Cauſes that Force which they are naturally deſtitute of, ſo as to enable them to effect what they are naturally incapable of effecting. If, for Inſtance, a Piece of Clay be naturally unable to reſtore Sight to the blind, no human Power can enrich it with that Virtue which Nature has denied it. We may indeed, by changing their Texture, make many Things Inſtruments of that for which they were unfit under a different Form. But even this Power is limited under certain Laws of Nature; And the utmoſt that our Abilities can pretend to, is ſometimes to aſſiſt Nature in its Operations, and to ſooth it as it were, into Action, by tempting it to bring forth that Energy it ſtrove to conceal, and by putting it in a proper Poſture for exerting the greateſt Force with which it is endowed. When therefore ſuch Operations appear as far exceed the Powers of Nature and the Skill of Man united, diſcerning the Impotency of all created Beings, We can ſolve them no otherwiſe than by recurring to that ſupreme Being *who hath created all theſe Things, and bringeth out their Hoſt by Number: Who encreaſeth Strength to them that have no Might.* Hence ariſeth the Teſtimony of Miracles for the divine Miſſion of him in whoſe

Behalf they are wrought. The Power of God undeniably witneſſeth his Truth, and proclaims the Juſtice of his Pretenſions. And therefore the Virtue of Miracles lies here, that their Teſtimony is manifeſtly the Teſtimony of divine Power.

THIS then is common to both Kinds of Evidence that they are Manifeſtations of the divine Interpoſition in Favour of his Pretenſions to whom, or for whoſe Sake, they are vouchſafed. But they differ in the Methods of making this Interpoſition known. They both lead to the Diſcovery of the ſame great Firſt-Mover, but by different Ways. Prophecy ſhews him as the great Lawgiver of the Univerſe, as He to whom alone the Volumes of Futurity are expanded, and to whom alone belongs the Privilege of ſeeing and directing every Movement of Nature, and beholding every Event with which the Womb of Time is pregnant. Miracles lay bare the Hand of the great Ruler of the Univerſe, and ſhew the awful Majeſty of him whoſe *Fiat* is a Law to the obedient World, who commands all the Springs of Nature, and bends them to his Will. He, for whom Prophecy ſpeaks, brings for his Credentials a Secret which could come only from the Cabinet-Council of Heaven: He, whoſe Claim is upheld by Miracles, demands Credit from Us by Virtue of a Power which none but the Almighty could delegate. In a Word, Prophecy demonſtrates God's Patronage of a Cauſe by Virtue of his Omniſcience, and Miracles by Virtue of his Omnipotence.

WE

We ſee now wherein the Force of theſe Two different Kinds of Evidence conſiſts, what they have in common, and in what they are diſtinguiſhed. Whence the Method of comparing them together in Order to diſcover where the Superiority lies, is eaſy. For, ſubſtituting that wherein their Powers conſiſt, the Compariſon will be betwixt theſe Attributes of God, and the Queſtion will become, which of the Two is the more convincing Argument of the Countenance and Concurrence of that God to whom they both belong. Let Us aſk Ourſelves then, does a Diſplay of the infinite Wiſdom make Us acknowledge God's Preſence ſooner than the ſtupendous Operations of his outſtretched Arm? Or are the Wonders of his Power clearer Demonſtrations of his attending Favour and Protection, than the illuſtrious Records of his Wiſdom? In whatever Hand We now entruſt the Balance, I am perſwaded that He, who holds it, will declare for an Equipollency. For the Attributes of the Deity are all alike his own, inſeparable, and incommunicable.

But though in their own Natures the Power of Prophecy and Miracles is equal, yet they may not always ſeem ſo to our Apprehenſions. Our Minds are not all alike affected with the ſame Things. Whether it be from ſome original and native Caſt in their Frame, or the Influence of that bodily Machine to which they are united; or whether Commerce with others, Habit, and Education impreſſes the Biaſs upon them, it is

certain that howſoever they have contracted it, there is a peculiar Turn in the Minds of Men by which ſome are inclined to receive Pleaſure and Conviction from one Kind of Argument more readily than from another, and to be moſt eaſily wrought upon by that, with which others are leſs moved. The ſame Truths become more attractive and amiable to their Underſtandings when placed in one Light than in another, as the ſame Objects do to their Sight. And to all both are moſt agreeable by being ſhewn in new and various Lights.

BUT to Us eſpecially, who live at a Diſtance from the Times when the Prophecies were compleated, and the Miracles wrought, who feel not their Efficacy by ſenſible, but by rational Impreſſions, there may be another Reaſon aſſigned for ſome Difference in them. For though the Manifeſtations of the divine Wiſdom, and the divine Power, when both are clearly felt, might make us equally ſenſible of God's Interpoſition, yet the Steps which lead to the clear Apprehenſion of them may not be equally eaſy to all. When we are once convinced that there were Prophecies given out and compleated in the Perſon of our Saviour, and that there were Miracles wrought in Vindication of his Doctrine, they may ſeem to our Underſtandings equipollent Proofs of his Divine Miſſion; but then the Way to this Conviction may not be in both Caſes equally obvious. In Order to be convinced that there were Miracles wrought in Proof of our Saviour's

viour's Pretenſions, we have only to ſatisfy ourſelves of the Authenticity of the Goſpel Hiſtory, and to learn from thence that ſuch particular Works were exhibited, and that ſuch particular Facts did really happen. But the Truth of Prophecies muſt be introduced to our Aſſent by a longer Progreſs. For after we are, in the ſame Manner as before, ſatisfied that ſome particular Events did happen in the Life of our Saviour, we are ſtill advanced but a little Way to a full Perſwaſion that the Prophecies of the Meſſiah received their Completion in theſe Events. There remains behind large Matter of Enquiry. The Authority of the Scriptures of the Old Teſtament muſt firſt be proved: theſe muſt be carefully examined for the Prophecies they contain: And, when they are found, we are to be aſſured that they belonged to the Character of the promiſed Meſſiah. After all this, a Compariſon is ſtill to be nicely made between them and the Events, for ſhewing the Fitneſs and Agreement between them. And when their Correſpondency is clearly ſeen, and we have no longer any Scruples remaining of the Reality both of the Events and Predictions ſeparately, or Suſpicion that the one may not yet belong to the other, then only are we fully ſenſible of the Proof which Prophecies yield of the divine Miſſion of our Saviour.

When both are clearly apprehended, they may have equal Power over our Minds. But the Truth of the one is not ſo ſoon eſtabliſhed there as of the other. They both lead finally to the

the ſame End, and if purſued bring us with equal Certainty to it, but not by Ways equally ſhort or eaſy. While ſome make their Approaches to the important Truth to which they lead by one Path, others may delight to inveſtigate it by another. But it muſt ſurely be equally agreeable and ſerviceable to all to know that it is acceſſible by more Ways than one, and that they are at Liberty to purſue that to which the Bent of their Mind, their Studies, or Opportunities ſhall determine them; or with varied and renewed Pleaſure, to explore both in their Turns.

WHAT has been ſaid may be illuſtrated by a familiar Example. *Euclid* has left us a Series of Mathematical Truths demonſtrated in a very elegant Manner. His Commentators, endeavouring to render ſuch uſeful Knowledge as eaſily attainable as poſſible, have adapted different Demonſtrations to all thoſe Propoſitions which ſeemed moſt difficult to be underſtood; drawing thoſe out into a fuller Explanation which He had delivered in a conciſer Manner, and demonſtrating thoſe by ſenſible Schemes which he had treated in a more abſtracted Way. We allow the Deſign its due Praiſe: not that one Demonſtration is truer than another, or gives better Evidence to the Propoſition, but becauſe various Geniuſes are better ſuited, pleaſed, or aſſiſted by theſe different Demonſtrations than they could have been by one alone. They are all equally convincing when underſtood, but, it may be, not equally pleaſing, nor equally clear to all Capacities.

pacities. However it contributes more to the Entertainment and Inſtruction of all, that they can place the Propoſition in that Light which themſelves ſhall moſt approve of, than if they had been confined to one View of it, and that, by trying ſeveral, one Poſition of it may at laſt be found which ſhall ſtrike every Capacity.

Thus We ſee that any Difference which may be in the Forces of Prophecy and Miracles for proving our Saviour's divine Miſſion, is not natural but accidental to them; and ariſes ſolely from the different Reception they meet with in the different Natures, or Abilities of thoſe to whom they are applied. God has graciouſly been pleaſed, in manifeſting to the World a Truth of ſuch univerſal Importance, to lead Us to it by various Ways, that different Natures, thus accommodated with what is moſt ſuitable to them, might not want the Means of attaining to that Knowledge which is equally neceſſary for all. If its Divinity had been atteſted by either of theſe ſingly, Chriſtianity would in all Ages have wanted many Converts, which it now owes to their joint Efficacy: And both Ways lying open, many have conſtantly been brought into the Flock of Chriſt who might have ſtrayed for ever without the Pale, if only one Entrance had been afforded them. Let not us then defraud the Goſpel of its Rights, by making the Gate which leads into it ſtraiter than its great Author has thought fit to make it: Nor allow ſuch poor ridiculous Sophiſtry to deceive Us which would prove

prove its Weakneſs from its Strength; which would make its numerous Forces hurtful to it, and take an Advantage againſt it from its having more Proofs, which could not have been found had it been ſupported by one alone: Which, by comparing one Argument of its Truth with another, would deſtroy all Arguments; and by ſhewing that Prophecy is ſtronger than Miracles make the World believe that it is weaker than if it had ſtood by the Force either of Prophecy or Miracles alone. Let us beware of receiving ſuch Refinements into Reaſoning, as have long ago been admitted into Life; which ſkilfully create Want out of Plenty, and induſtriouſly turn the Bounties of Heaven into Curſes, by making that Poiſon which was deſigned for wholeſome Food. If one of theſe great Proofs of the Divinity of the Goſpel ſhould have more Power over the Minds of particular Men than the other, they, who feel it, are the only Judges which that is. Every Man is ſenſible of the Workings of his own Mind alone, and therefore we might as well pretend to be conſcious for others, as to determine with which of theſe Proofs they ſhall be moſt affected, or which ſhall draw them moſt mightily to Conviction. Let not Us quarrel with Men becauſe they will not be convinced in the ſame Way with Ourſelves. If they are gained over to Conviction, by what Road they arrived at it is hardly worth Enquiry; all is done that any juſt Concern of ours for them can prompt Us to wiſh, or their own Salvation does demand.

It

It is the Buſineſs of the Friends and Aſſertors of Chriſtianity to ſet both theſe Proofs in the cleareſt Light they are able, and then to leave all Men to apprehend for Themſelves: To preſs Home the great Argument for its Truth in its full Extent, not confining themſelves to any peculiar Branch of it; And, while they now try one Power and then another till they find out the prevailing one, not to ſuffer one Soul to fail of the Kingdom of Chriſt which may by any Induſtry of theirs be gained over to it: to light ſome into it by ſetting up to their View the glorious Effulgency of Gods eternal Wiſdom, and to draw others by diſplaying before them all the Wonders of his Power: Like ſkilful Artiſts, ſtill to encreaſe the Force of their Machine by combining Powers with Powers, as the Greatneſs of the Work to be done ſhall require it: to add Prophecy to Prophecy till the whole ſhall grow up into one grand complicated Prophecy; and to join Miracle to Miracle, till all ſhall ſtand embattled in one invincible Body: And then laſt of all, to unite both theſe Powers alſo, till that Energy, which was before ſcattered and diſtributed through various Parts, being now collected into one, the Goſpel ſhall ſtand forth impregnable, and all the Forces of Infidelity ſhall ſink before it.

FINIS.